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## CURRENT COMMENT.

A FEW weeks ago we paid our respects to the Root resolutions which guarantee the sovereignty and integrity of China, pointing out their similarity to the guarantees afforded Morocco by the conferences at Madrid in 1880 and at Algeciras in 1906. We now observe that a sub-committee on the Chinese tariff has come out of the pene-tralia in Washington with a proposal to permit China to levy a five-per-cent duty on imports. There is sovereignty for you!—when the representatives of a crew of robber States go into collusion in Washington and decide the rate of tariff that China shall be allowed to impose on her imports! Excuse us if we laugh.

CHINESE commercial delegates in Washington stood by the conference long enough to give Japan a fair square chance to be decent; and then they cabled home to urge reinforcement of the nation-wide boycott against Japanese goods of every description. The boycott is the only weapon worth using; it is deadly effective, but difficult to keep in play. Still, China did very well with it against Japan last year and the year before, and if as provocation increases resentment deepens, she ought to do much better with it now, and we believe and hope she will. The point to be observed, however, is that this action indicates that the Chinese have turned their backs on the conference as a failure—as well they may—and are shaping their defences for the future. Thus we see what the conference amounts to by way of accommodating conflicting interests in the Far East! The only certainty that China can see is the one manifest to readers of this paper, namely: that China is going to be thoroughly and eagerly looted. China now, apparently, is not going to concern herself with the various chicanery and overreaching going on among the buccaneers who are trying to arrange the apportionment of this loot, but is out for as general a policy of self-defence as she can contrive.

THE solemn earnestness with which politicians consider such futilities as Mr. Root's proposed rules governing submarine warfare makes one wonder whether they have forgotten the fate of the Declaration of London or whether they merely think every one else has forgotten it. The Declaration of London, it will be remembered, was a set of rules formulated by a conference of the great Powers not long before the late war began; and the purpose of these rules was to make naval warfare as humane

as possible. After the beginning of hostilities President Wilson asked the belligerent Powers whether they were prepared to respect these rules. Germany and Austria replied in the affirmative, but Great Britain made so many reservations that her reply amounted to a negative. Mr. Wilson thereupon withdrew his request, and all the belligerents, following the British lead, proceeded to behave as if there were no laws governing naval warfare save those of convenience or necessity; and indeed, there are none others that hold in time of war.

ALL this is recent history; so is the violation of various and sundry neutralities, and of the Hague treaties regarding the rights of neutrals; so is our Government's violation of its treaty with Germany providing that in case of war all German citizens in this country should have nine months in which to dispose of their property and leave the country. Yet with this record of treaty-violations back of them, our delegation to the arms-conference, and the delegations of the other Powers represented, solemnly propose that in time of war, submarines may stop and search ships, but may not torpedo them without warning! If anything could be more pretentiously absurd, it would be the dictum recently reported from Washington, in answer to the argument that the submarine would thus have to expose itself to the risk of challenging an armed vessel, that the submarine must simply take that risk. Can anyone who has given half an eye to world affairs during the past eight years imagine any Government allowing such an agreement to last five minutes after a declaration of war? If there be such a one either among the delegations to the conference or outside of them, then he is due to be speedily disillusioned the next time hostilities commence.

ASSOCIATE JUSTICE CLARKE, of the United States Supreme Court, stirred up a hornet's nest last week by suggesting cancellation of Allied war-debts due the United States. Some members of Congress intimated that it was bad form for one who belongs to a co-ordinate branch of the Government to express an opinion about a matter that is wholly in the purview of the legislative branch. This seems to be overdoing a point of etiquette, analogous to waiting for an introduction before trying to haul a drowning imbecile out of the river. There is so little intelligence in Congress that any proffered augmentation of it should be welcomed from any quarter, even such an unlikely quarter as the Supreme Court. Senator Watson says that "any cancellation of the foreign indebtedness is not to be considered for a moment." Presumably, then, that means it must be paid. Very well. In what does Senator Watson want it paid? In services? We have enough unemployment as it is. In goods? Hardly. The looks of the new tariff seem to show an implacable and nervous aversion to that form of payment. But if not in goods or services, in what can the blessed thing be paid? There is nothing else. Paying that indebtedness means turning ten billion dollars worth of goods or services, which no country has or can command, over to this country which would yell with terror if it saw them coming. We are not taking up the cudgels for Justice Clarke, because that debt will never be paid as long as the world stands, and the question is purely academic. The country is simply out that much on its little spree, and the money may in the long run turn out well invested. But it is worth while, perhaps, to point out what the payment of that debt means, since so few even of those outside of Congress seem to know.

THE much-rumoured Christmas amnesty for political prisoners dwindled to the commutation of the sentences of twenty-four, of whom six were already at liberty on parole, three are to be deported, and four could scarcely be called politicals. Among those so grudgingly released was Mr. Eugene Debs, the majority of whose fellow-towners of Terre Haute, Indiana, had taken the trouble to sign a petition that he be freed. There would seem to be a certain grim irony in liberating on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus a man incarcerated primarily because of his Christian spirit. By speaking out like a Christian Mr. Debs rendered a splendid service to his fellow-citizens at a time when they were being bamboozled into madness by the hymns of hate of politicians drunk with power and profiteers arrogant with loot. He stated, in plain, dignified language, that his affection for his fellow-men could not permit him to endorse human slaughter, and he pointed out that no human problems could be solved by disembowelling one's neighbours, a contention that has been amply justified by the result. Some of Mr. Debs's friends seem to be chagrined that President Harding did not restore him to citizenship, but in our opinion it would be impertinent as well as impolitic to give back civic rights to Mr. Debs under a political government which has found it desirable to keep him in jail for nearly three years. As a conspicuously sincere Christian Mr. Debs can scarcely be a loyal member of a political society founded on privilege and exploitation.

WHEN the small-town mind is translated from its natural habitat on the cracker-barrel of the local grocery-store and is plumped into one of the seats of the mighty, the results are likely to be grotesque. Thus Attorney-General Daugherty's tortuous apologia on the release of Mr. Debs is one of the most remarkable documents in our political history. In it Mr. Daugherty plainly takes the stand that any person who advocates a change in the government ought to be put away for a period to teach him a lesson and protect his fellow-citizens from contamination. This is a droll maxim, and it is significant of the mental and spiritual deterioration of the Department of Justice. Before the war the Department was mainly concerned with the gentle art of trust-busting, an activity which resulted chiefly in upsetting to some extent our economic life. As soon as the war broke out, the Department set up a dictatorship over opinion, directing its energies largely to the suppression of Christians and pacifists, who after all form but a small part of the population. Now Mr. Daugherty goes a step farther in proscribing all believers in political evolution. A good course in the first few paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence might benefit this political homunculus in his present deplorable state.

WE would give just anything if we might have been present when Eugene Debs confronted President Harding and Attorney-General Daugherty. There is a deal of solid entertainment in watching the puzzlement of the powers that be, when they take on somebody who simply isn't interested in a single thing that they can do. We were always sorry that we could not be around when Athanasius was haled up and threatened with exile and confiscation of his property. He replied that he hardly saw how they could exile him, since his home was among the many mansions; and since he had laid up all his treasure in heaven, he thought they might have more or less trouble about confiscating it. Politicians so seldom cross the trail of a real man that when they do, they do not know what to make of him. Socrates made the Athenian dicastery look like a kindergarten, and a word or two from the Nazarene turned an able and rather conscientious Roman procurator inside out; and after his talk with Mr. Debs the other day, all that the Attorney-General could find to say was that he hoped Mr. Debs "may direct his talents to a useful purpose," and also that "the notoriety he has received may not be commercialized"! Well, what can a poor man say, when he is situated where he has to say something, and neither dares nor knows how to say the right thing, and where anything but the right thing will inevitably make

him out an ass? Say what one will, Mr. Daugherty was in a hard position, and for our part, we are sorry for him.

THERE was no Christmas amnesty forthcoming from the Great White Father for the Haitian people. On the contrary, the chairman of the congressional committee which recently made an investigatory junket to the island under Republican auspices confirmed the forcible seizure of the country under Woodrow the Pious and stated that the American Government should continue to hold the country by force for an indefinite period. An interesting feature of the report is the recommendation for an immediate loan to Haiti, or rather to the American Government of Haiti, to enable it to pay debts owing to European countries. This seems nothing less than a roundabout scheme for more donations to the European militarists, who in all conscience have wasted enough of our money already. Doubtless the loan will be arranged by certain American bankers at thumping interest, and in approved imperialist style our armed forces will stay on the ground until the last penny is sweated out of the inhabitants. Apparently our political investigators do not think it expedient to take the American people into their confidence and say why it was necessary, after they had enjoyed a century of freedom, to steal away the liberties of the Haitians, and why it is necessary to continue to hold them in political bondage. They merely remark unctuously that "peace and order have been established everywhere," a phrase that covers a multitude of imperialist sins. It looks as if Haiti were in for a long dose of democracy, civilization and sanitation, administered at her own expense by the usual black-jacking methods.

IN India and Egypt, the nationalist stew seems to be bubbling up pretty near to the top of the pot. We have read some striking and sensational reports of the progress of the nationalist movements within the week, but exaggeration is easily possible, and comment will keep until we get more reliable information. The Manchester *Guardian*, however, says that the gravity of the situation in Egypt can not be exaggerated, and compares the case with that of Ireland, observing that "there are only too good reasons to fear that we are preparing a situation from which it will be impossible to withdraw—as withdraw we must—without much bloodshed and much humiliation." This brings us to the point of asking once more whether it is invariably necessary to go through a Black-and-Tan period in order to find out that the nationalist spirit is irrepressible, and that efforts to repress it cost more than they are worth. The Associated Press, for instance, reports an official notice posted at Suez, that if the military aeroplanes "observe an assembly" they will bomb it—bomb it first, apparently, and discover its character afterwards. One may remind oneself profitably that it is the sort of gentry responsible for such a policy as this—for the United States policy in Haiti and Santo Domingo, for French and Japanese policy in the Far East—who now have their heads together in Washington over the limitation of armament, upholding the sovereignty and integrity of China, and the like.

As to India, there seems no reason for doubting the report that the British Government's recent display of terrorism has enhanced Ghandi's prestige and stiffened the backbone of the non-coöperation movement. It would naturally work out that way; therefore one is not surprised to read that the all-India Congress voted Ghandi into the job of supreme executive authority. Another report which, if astonishing, is credible because there would be no object in expanding the figures, is that political arrests in Calcutta within the last six weeks reach a total of 3500. The report given out at Washington on New Year's Day, that a republic had been proclaimed by the Indian nationalists, needs a good deal of corroboration, especially as it contains a statement that Ghandi's notorious policy of non-violent resistance has been modified to sanction violence for defensive purposes only. We have our doubts of this.

If the British and French premiers carry out their reported intention to invite M. Chicherin, the Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to a conference, we should mightily like to be present when it takes place. M. Chicherin, judging from his diplomatic correspondence, has a direct and forthright style of speech which would be disconcerting to old-school diplomats like Mr. Lloyd George and M. Briand. The Government which M. Chicherin represents has no need to conceal from its left hand what its right hand is doing; whereas such tactics are inevitable in the diplomacy of a Government like Mr. Lloyd George's or M. Briand's. The Soviet Government has no concession-hunting privileged class for which to do business with foreign Governments; and its policy appears to be like the early policy of the United States, in that it is averse to political alliances. Therefore, it is able to talk to other Governments with frankness and candour. This advantage, coupled with M. Chicherin's remarkable facility and forcefulness of verbal expression, ought to make a conference between this representative of the new diplomacy and the two chief exponents of the old, worth considerably more than the price of admission.

THE Bureau of Industrial Research has issued a challenge to American newspapers to investigate themselves in regard to their treatment of labour news. It is a courteous document, and carries evidence enough of what everybody knows, i. e., that there is good reason for such an investigation. Hence, the challenge, in so far as any notice is taken of it, has some publicity-value for the Bureau's purposes, but is otherwise not to be taken seriously. The thing to be remembered is that there is not, as far as this paper is aware, a single newspaper in the United States. There is not, that is, a single publication which has for its first business the gathering and purveying of news, and earns its living thereby. The fact that what we call newspapers are sold for two or three cents per copy is positive proof of this. The first business of newspapers, commonly so called, is with the sale of advertising-space. It is by this that they get their living. They are advertising broadsheets; and such news as they print is, like their other features, carried with a view solely to the enhancement of their value as carriers of advertising. Time and again we have said that we do not see anything dishonest or reprehensible about this. The sum of the whole matter is, simply, that when the people care enough about honest news to be willing to pay for it, they will get it. If they are so simple-minded as to think they can get honest news for less than the price of the paper it is printed on, or so parsimonious as to wish for it or think they ought to have it at such a figure, we have no great sympathy for them in their inevitable disappointment.

FOR the mellow joviality of *Mr. Punch's* contribution to the amenities of life—a contribution that is all the more valuable by reason of its contrast with the superficial smartness of *Punch's* American competitors—we give thanks, each week, to the giver of all good. Our readers will not then believe us insensible to the finer qualities of "the London Charivari," when we say that we find *Punch* surprisingly lacking in the antiseptic irreverence which it used abundantly to show, which still characterizes some of the French and German comics, and is perhaps best known in America through the work of Mr. Art Young in *Good Morning*, and Messrs. Boardman Robinson and Gropper in the *Liberator*. We are only too well aware that geniality on the one hand, or bitterness on the other, is likely to be the outcome of one's conception of the world as a snug little planet, well provided with warm dinners, or as a cold and inhospitable star, bumping about in empty space; and yet it seems conceivable that there might eventually come forth a journal which would be as much aware of the existence of evil as *Good Morning* and as humanly companionable as *Punch*. If Gogol should reappear among us, we should like the privilege of nominating him for the editorship of this millennial magazine; we should like to hear again the voice of the man who lashed so mercilessly the faults and

folly of the serf-drivers, the bureaucrats, the dreamers, and the rascals of Russia—the man who was nevertheless moved more by humanism than by nihilism, more by affirmation than by negation, more by the love of that which he loved than by the hatred of the villainies which he sought to scourge out of his country.

**SENATOR McCUMBER** appears to believe that children ought to work; and so do we. He remarked during the Senate tariff-hearings that if a child never works until he is sixteen years old, he never will learn to work; and this is true enough, though a wholly superfluous statement. Children are by nature about the hardest-working critters in creation. If Senator McCumber would for one day only undertake to follow the average five-year-old child through its regular pursuits, he would find that all his previous notions of hard work were only rudimentary. We heartily agree with Mr. McCumber that work is a good thing for children, and all the children that we ever saw or heard of seem to agree too, since there is no such thing as keeping them away from work except by force without stint or limit. Mr. McCumber's idea of work, however, seems to be that of work under an employer, for pay; and this is another thing altogether. Child labour, as commonly understood, is one of the most patent and unmistakable marks of an uncivilized community, and if Senator McCumber said, as according to the press-reports he did say, anything which could by any conjuration be taken as a good word for it, he ought to be ashamed of himself.

THIS paper hears with pleasure of the plans proposed by the prohibition-enforcement officials to do away with fermented wine for sacramental purposes. Whatever anyone can do to make prohibition even more ridiculous and odious than it now is, should be heartily welcomed; and this move seems calculated with no little ingenuity to have this beneficent effect, for if the thing is pressed, two powerful ecclesiastical bodies, at least—the Roman Catholic and Protestant Episcopal—will probably rise up *en masse* and see what's what. The general effect of prohibition has been to redistribute and enhance the profits of the liquor-industry, by diverting traffic from regular to irregular channels. It has subverted self-respect, created overnight several million habitual criminals, promoted the sale and use of deleterious and frequently of poisonous liquors, erected graft and blackmail into a stupendous national institution, and found lucrative political berths for myriads of the very lowest order of human beings, i. e., persons who are willing, for the sake of money, and chiefly illicit at that, to become spies, sneaks, informers, meddlers, blackmailers and embracers. Having ourselves an inordinate contempt for sumptuary law, and naturally desirous of seeing our sentiments as widely shared as possible, we rather welcomed prohibition as an ally; and we are pleased to see that it is doing its work, which is our work, too, so well. We could not hope in fifty years to inculcate as wide and profound a disrespect for law as prohibition has already inculcated. It is notorious that in the practice of *Realpolitik*, one bears no gratitude towards a jackal after its usefulness is past, e. g., Mr. Lloyd George and Ulster. Hence we shall not be found defending prohibition when it has served our cause to its utmost.

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## TOPICS OF THE DAY.

## FRANCE OPENS THE WINDOWS.

THE policy of the French Government is now being hammered on all sides as the wicked wrecker of the Washington conference. The French delegates are inflexible in the matter of submarines, and will not yield even to oblige Great Britain. They even carry contumacy to the point of saying that if their hand is crowded, they will raise the question of the freedom of the seas, which no one wants them to do because the freedom of the seas is a real issue, and discussion of it would considerably embarrass all hands, and particularly Great Britain. It is rotten bad sportsmanship to threaten the conference with a real issue; and hence our French friends have made themselves unpopular, especially with the liberal journals of this country. These attack them savagely, though the New York *World*, to whom the League of Nations, like the old grandmother's pennyroyal, is a cure for all known ills, says that the French chauvinists and imperialists are merely capitalizing the situation created by this country's refusal to join the League. Some say that the French are holding the submarine threat over the British by way of blackmail in order to get a guarantee of assistance in case of attack; which is very doubtful. The correspondent of the Manchester *Guardian* thinks that French pride is piqued by her being left out of reckoning among the chief naval powers when the ratio of capital ships was under discussion; which may count for something, but in our judgment, not much. Our notion is that the French have their eye on the English routes in the Mediterranean region. This may be chimerical, but the map shows that a nest or two of submarines properly distributed in the Mediterranean could make things exceedingly lively down there.

Whatever the motive of the French delegates may be, we have to confess that we survey their behaviour with the first spark of interest that the conference has elicited from us. Their attitude takes us back to the days of the peace-conference in Paris, when the only feature vivid enough to keep us awake while we were looking at it was the figure of old Clemenceau. He presented, as the French delegates are now presenting, such a contrast to his associates that we found ourselves regarding him with admiration and almost with approval. He was cynical, unscrupulous and unprincipled throughout, as they were; but unlike them, he never pretended to be anything else. He never spewed great volumes of cant about liberty, democracy and the sacredness of human rights. He was openly and avowedly out for everything that was not nailed down. You got a play for your money, as the phrase goes, with a man like Clemenceau; and now the flat statement of the French delegates, standing out above the Brummagem moralities and bilgewater pietisms of the English, American and Japanese representatives, comes to us, at least, as a distinct relief.

It comes, too, at just the right time, for the whole question of the "regulation" of submarines and aerial warfare is such peculiarly disgusting mendacity and claptrap that one can afford to be grateful to the French for roughly shutting off the afflictive powwow over it. Is it possible that anyone really imagines that submarine warfare, aerial warfare and poison-gas warfare can be regulated? We notice that this absurd pretension is too much even for some of our liberal friends. The Manchester *Guardian* not long ago, spoke of the tendency of nations at war to save themselves by all means, fair or foul, and to be good afterwards. Did one single international agreement or

regulation upon the conduct of warfare survive the year 1918? Not one. It is all very well for us to blame the Germans and for the Germans to blame us and for this-or-that-one to blame the other; but the fact is, that not one single combatant nation respected, or was encouraged to respect, one single provision of international agreement for the conduct of "civilized warfare." The plain truth is that Mr. Root's resolutions which are set forth ostensibly for the governance of submarine warfare, are the quintessence of humbug; and the French, in our opinion, did well to blow the whole nauseous pretence out of the windows.

Most impudent of all is the effrontery of discussion by a conference of nationalist and imperialist politicians, of the exemptions and immunities to be accorded civilians and non-combatants. There are certain immunities that warfare invariably and carefully respects; but they are the immunities of ownership. Nothing is ever said about these; no conference ever discusses them; no commissions of military and naval experts ever report upon them. They are maintained by a tacit understanding that is nevertheless most eloquent in its inviolability. "There is no speech nor language," the Psalmist says, "their voice is not heard; but their line is gone out unto all lands and their words unto the ends of the world." How was it that the rich metallurgical basin of Briey was hallowed ground and undisturbed, during the late war? Why was a Norwegian ship, the "Bennesloet," loaded with nickel, hailing from a French colony for Hamburg, with half her cargo paid for in advance by Krupp, released after having been stopped and brought into the harbour of Brest, 24 September, 1914, and permitted to proceed upon her way? Why did the coal-districts of Pas-de-Calais remain undisturbed? Why did it so regularly happen that whenever a town was bombed—Dunkirk, for instance—munition-works owned by international syndicates were not hit? Indeed, war has its conventions, no less strictly adhered to because so little known. As the French deputy Renaudel observed, it is really "only for the poor devils that war is not a gentleman's agreement." Aside from the immunities of ownership, however, there are none which warfare respects or can be compelled to respect; and the assumption that there may be such, is a cruel and contemptible mockery.

As our readers know, while this paper has a profound respect and regard for most things that are French, we never have been favourably impressed by the French Government. One thing, however, must be said for it. It can not altogether escape the essentially French unhandiness with methods of indirection. The French tendency is rather for being objective, logical, explicit, and strong; and like any other department of general French culture, French rascality, as exemplified by the Government of France, is bound, in some degree, to be affected in its practical concerns by this admirable tendency. This was noticed years ago by that acute observer, Mr. Dooley, in his perspicacious study of the methods of French and British imperialism—a study, by the way, which at just this stage of the Washington conference, should be brought out anew and regarded attentively by every one:

In comes th' Englishman with a coon king on ayether ar-<sup>m</sup> that he has just injooiced to lind him their kingdoms on a promiss'ry note, an' he sees th' Frinchman emergin' from th' rooms iv th' safe. 'What ar-re ye doin' here?' asks th' Englishman. 'Robbin' th' naygurs,' says th' Frinchman, bein' truthful as well as polite. 'Wicked man!' says th' Englishman. 'An' what ar-re ye doin' here?' asks th' Frinchman. 'Improvin' th' morals iv th' inhabitants,' says th' Englishman. 'Is it not so, 'Rastus?' 'It is,' says one iv th' kings, 'I'm a poorer but a betther man since ye came,' he says.

Under the circumstances, we feel somewhat like the old lady who, when her spirit of Christian charity was put to the test, could find a good word to say even for Satan. At least, she said, he was an admirable model of attention to one's own business. So, while we ought to be very wroth with the French delegates, no doubt, and while we can usually be more or less depended on to denounce and deplore, to view with alarm and observe with indignation, we feel that in the present premises we can not quite make good. To tell the truth, we are so nearly suffocated by the viscid and platinidinous moralities of the conference, that the breath of fresh air which the French delegates have let in upon our flaccid lungs means more to us at the moment than anything else.

### STEPPE BY STEPPE.

WHILE the statesmen of the great Powers gathered at Washington are ostentatiously fondling a stuffed dove labelled "Far East," a more realistic performance is going on in Siberia, where the Japanese are extending their forcible occupation of alien real estate.

When Semenov and other Russian and Mongolian brigands no longer received encouragement from the Allied saviours of civilization to spread disorder in the wild eastern territory, and therefore could no longer carry on business as usual, Japan in some mysterious way seemed to fall heir to the considerable remnants of their forces. These forces have been kept together in the neighbourhood of Vladivostok and have served the purposes of militia from time to time for the various puppet Governments that Japan has set up in that vicinity. Recent reports state that these precious ruffians have been joined lately by a large band of Wrangel's sometime heroes, imported from Constantinople, and Washington advices declare that this hybrid army has been raiding northward and captured Khabarovsk, some hundreds of miles from Vladivostok. By thus extending the holdings of its puppet Government, the Japanese Government, it is stated, would bring within its control valuable mining- and timber-lands.

Other reports tell of Russian islands seized by the Japanese, until now they have gained virtual control of the Siberian littoral. On the island of Sakhalin, on which certain American interests have been trying to secure concessions from the Russian Soviet Government, Japanese control is so complete, according to the *New York Times*, that Russian citizens are now classed as foreigners. These islands have thus become insular possessions of Japan, which, it is interesting to note, under the proposed four-Power treaty, the American people are pledged to defend for Japan with their blood and treasure.

Moreover, the purpose of a further extension of Japanese hegemony into the Siberian hinterland is foreshadowed in the Japanese Government's arrogant demand on the Far Eastern Republic that Japanese subjects be granted the same status within the boundaries of the Republic as its own citizens; and that the Japanese Government be permitted to maintain an armed force within the Republic to enforce this right—a proposal which would reduce the Far Eastern Republic to the condition of a province of Japan.

Dispatches telling of these further encroachments on Russian territory are as yet merely fragmentary. They are of peculiar interest at this time, whether the alleged secret entente between France and Japan is genuine or not, because they are the first indication of something tangible emanating

from the Washington conference. Unless the Japanese Government had some secret understanding in the premises with the statesmen of the other Powers, this obviously would be an inopportune moment to extend its burglarious activities in alien territory. Apparently the recent amiability of the Japanese delegates in accepting American and British proposals has not been without its *quid pro quo*. It is a fair guess, as this paper predicted, that the hard-featured pacifists in Washington have been whispering together to a purpose while they caressed the stuffed dove. In any case, the point to be remarked is that the aggression of the Japanese Government increases materially the perilously large amount of *irredenta* territory snatched by the victors in the war. The natives of Eastern Siberia are presumably as delighted with Japanese occupancy as would be the natives of Staten Island if some foreign Power seized their borough by force and set up a nominal Government of native gunmen.

It is worth recalling that the Japanese began to land troops at Vladivostok early in 1918, though they made no formal pretence of occupancy until 3 August of that year. On that date the Japanese Government issued a formal statement to the effect that their armed forces had come merely to repel "German activities" in Siberia, and that as soon as this German menace was removed, all Japanese forces would be withdrawn and "would leave wholly unimpaired the sovereignty of Russia in all its phases, whether political or military." Inasmuch as the nearest German armed force at that time was upwards of 6000 miles from Vladivostok, it seemed reasonable in the Siberians to feel somewhat sceptical about this very polite declaration, even though Mr. Balfour on behalf of the British Government gave emphatic assurances of Japanese sincerity, and the American Ambassador in Russia, speaking presumably for his Government in a somewhat incoherent statement, had backed up Japanese good faith. Of course it has long since become apparent that the pledges of the Japanese Government were as illusory as its repeated declarations that its occupancy of Korea was merely temporary. As for the assurances of the other Governments in the case, they are as worthless as paper roubles.

### THE DIARY OF AN HONEST MAN.

We referred not long ago to the "Mirrors of Downing Street," and similar books which attempt to portray public men stripped of the glamour of office, as indications of an awakening sense of reality, a refreshing change from the custom of surrounding official personages with a fictitious atmosphere of importance, much as the pompous robes of the judge and the jargon of the courtroom are employed to impress the unthinking. Mr. Lytton Strachey, whose work we did not mention specifically, has used the method of frankness with considerable effect, an effect heightened by an engaging sense of humour; but nothing that we have read lately throws so clear a light upon the official mind as the political discussion which runs through the diaries of Mr. Wilfred Scawen Blunt. This paper reviewed these diaries more than a year ago, in their English edition; and now that an American edition has come out through Mr. Knopf we feel justified in making further mention of them.

If any of our readers have thought us captious in our occasional reflections upon the vagaries of our liberal friends, a perusal of Mr. Blunt's journals would, we believe, help to correct that impression. They present a running commentary upon certain important phases of English history between the years 1888 and

1914, and give the reader more than one glimpse of the causes of the world-war. A Tory and a land-owner by circumstances of birth and inheritance, Mr. Blunt's sympathetic nature attached him first to the cause of Irish Home Rule, and later made him a champion of Islam and a consistent opponent of the British occupation of Egypt. After an unsuccessful parliamentary contest in Ireland, with its sequel of two months in jail, he endeavoured to escape from the sordid entanglements of party politics by turning his back upon England and making his home on the edge of the African desert. Apparently, however, he was not destined to avoid political strife but to play a lone hand and to be all the more effective because unrestrained by the compromises inseparable from political office.

As with many another, Mr. Blunt's most useful work was something incidental, and in its larger aspects, also, perhaps unconsidered. He kept a journal in which he put down the confidential opinions of his friends and associates, and as the circle of his acquaintances included the chief figures on both sides of the nationalist struggle in Egypt and Ireland, the record gives a striking and unusual insight into the workings of British imperialism, and supplies a clue to the motives of the leading actors in the tragic drama. From this informal chronicle one is able to get a better idea of the practical processes of government than one could extract from the conventional history or biography. It is not our purpose to review these interesting volumes a second time, or to dwell upon them as an interpretation of important historical facts, but rather to point to them as furnishing a confirmation of the view this paper has taken regarding the criminality of Governments in general, and the sorry part played in them by political Liberals no less than by Conservatives.

The attitude of the Tories appears to be sufficiently cynical, as Mr. Blunt exhibits them engaged in extending the limits of empire with small consideration for justice and less for mercy; their young men looking upon the wars in Africa as sporting events in which the natives figured as game, and their politicians staking human lives against their own advancement. But there is something refreshing and almost admirable in frank Tory brutality, when contrasted with the practice of Liberal politicians whose pretence of high morality is shown by Mr. Blunt to be little more than the parliamentary or electioneering tactics of a formal Opposition; or with the extraordinary resourcefulness of the liberal press in finding excuse for crimes against weak nations, except when they are committed by foreigners. Mr. Blunt was not alone in regarding Stolypin as "a tyrant of the worst kind, affecting liberal ideas, and at the same time ruling by spies and secret police and arrests and hangings and deportations to Siberia"; but few Englishmen were candid enough to admit that Stolypin's technique was diligently followed by British statesmen, even Liberals like Lord Morley in India, and Sir Edward Grey in Egypt. "These modern Liberals," writes Mr. Blunt, "are worse than any of the old reactionaries"; and when professions are brought to the test of action, who can deny it? From the old reactionary, one at least knew what one would get and at what he would stop; and from the Liberal one could know neither.

His freedom from party-loyalty permitted Mr. Blunt to note with unclouded vision the perennial failure of political methods and the perennial and vicious cowardice of politicians. He saw that the Irish love of liberty began and ended at home, and that the Liberals in office clung to the traditional policy of the Foreign

Office. But he failed to perceive the futility of expecting the political organization to advance the cause of self-government. His mind, trained in the subtleties of diplomacy, was uninstructed regarding the nature of economic laws and their bearing on the problems to which he devoted the best energies of his life. The owner of estates which gave him five votes in the parliamentary elections, an intimate friend of political leaders like Mr. George Wyndham and Mr. Winston Churchill, in close touch with Mr. John Redmond and Mr. John Dillon, his mind was centred upon political considerations; economics passed him by. The diaries end on the eve of the great war, therefore, in profound and inevitable discouragement; though we may imagine the writer in his old age looking out upon the world from the seclusion of his Sussex home, with a rekindling of hope as he sees the system of empire beginning to disappear in the shadow of bankruptcy, with the prospect of political freedom rising before Ireland, India and Egypt.

Unfortunately, the goal of national aspiration is but the starting point of real emancipation, if, indeed, it be not something less than that. Human happiness is little served by allegiance to political nationalist standards. The creation of the succession-States in Europe has been but a means of intensifying suffering and of increasing penury, helplessness and hunger. Not that the craving for self-government is a misguided passion—by no means—but that self-government is not sufficiently understood to be less a matter of political than of economic independence. Yet such it has been proved to be, if proof were needed, in all the new States, and in Russia, and will be proved once more in Ireland and India whenever the British flag is once for all hauled down. As we have often pointed out, the nationality of their exploiters makes small practical difference to the exploited masses.

In every country the contest of political parties is a sham fight. It matters little which side wins, as long as the political system which permits the continuous exploitation of a dependent propertyless class remains in force. The tendency of the British political Liberals to maintain this system has been so marked that greater actual advances towards economic emancipation have been made under Conservative Governments than under Liberal Governments! The Liberals, when out of office, know how to use the ritual of an appeal to the general interest, and by stimulating public sentiment, they have often wrung significant reforms from their opponents. When they are safely back in power, they behave like our Democratic party, which is the American representative of a quasi-liberal tradition. Any hope that the recent Liberal success in Canada will result in a substantial repeal of trade-restrictions, lies more in the presence of the still more liberal opposition of the Progressive than in the odd chance of fulfilment of the Liberal party's campaign-promises.

Only by the removal of barriers which stand in the way of trade and production can the evolution of society proceed and a status of actual involuntary servitude on the part of the masses be made to give way to one of equality; and political organization is expressly directed to delay the process. In his application of the principle of the boycott in order to paralyse an alien political rule, Mahatma Ghandi has improved on the conventional means endorsed by Mr. Blunt, of setting one political force against another, both of which are wholly inimical to the fundamental interests of the people. In 1909 Mr. Winston Churchill predicted that "If they [the people of India] ever unite against us

and put us in Coventry all round, the game would be up. If they could agree to have nothing at all to do with us, the whole thing would collapse."

Although they have followed this advice, and appear to be doing well with it, the wisdom of the Indians will be put to a much harder test when they have gained their independence and attempt to regulate for themselves the primary business of life—the production and exchange of wealth. Some of the leaders have refused to become identified with the free-trade movement because the power to tax imports is connected in their minds with the exercise of sovereignty; though by implication Ghandi's Golden Rule policy includes universal economic freedom and equality. One's best hope is, though it be a faint one, that the Indians may have discerned that as long as political power is used to preserve the *status quo* in the economic struggle, justice will remain pretty much what Sir William Harcourt said it was, "only a question of personalities in any country."

### THE ART OF THE CINEMA.

SINCE this paper has a natural-born interest in experiment and adventure in the arts, it does not take very kindly to some of the criticism that is still in circulation on the subject of the motion-picture. In company with some of our friends, we recognize the fact that the motion-picture, as it is presented to the spectator, is usually about as lively and inspiring as a soda-biscuit; also we realize that in the process of registration and reproduction, an elaborate apparatus is involved; and yet it seems to us a thoroughly futile and stultifying business to attribute the spiritless quality of the finished product to the mechanical intricacy of the camera and the projector. To do this is to say that because of the mechanistic character of the medium, the motion-picture can never be a vehicle for creative art. Obviously, such a criticism is about as stimulating as a wholesale condemnation of music and painting, on the ground that cat-gut, copper wire, camel's hair and canvas are things of a grossly material character.

To us it seems that one of the greatest obstacles to the development of a rich and genuine art of the cinema is the unconscious acceptance, by the picture-makers themselves, of the distinction between the thought to be expressed, and the medium of expression. In the fine arts—in the creation of objects of taste and beauty in form, colour, sound, movement, or the written word—no distinction between thought and medium is possible. The painter *thinks* in paint; the poet *thinks* in words; the composer *thinks* in the very sounds that pour out from the organ and the orchestra. These things are the stuff of the artist's imagination; he creates out of chaos in the terms of his medium; he feels the medium to be, not a restriction upon expression, but a part of the very essence of his thought. Only when the artist descends from creation to borrowing and adaptation does one perceive a distinction between the idea and the means of expression; and then only because a thought originally conceived in other terms has been squeezed into the forms of a strange medium.

If one accepts these principles as sound and sensible, one has no trouble in explaining the spiritless character of most of the motion-pictures that are offered to the public. The medium itself may have limitations, but assuredly it has possibilities also; and the producers of pictures have emphasized the limitations and denied the possibilities of their vehicle by begging and borrowing their material, instead of creating it out of the

whole cloth of a new art. We do not pretend to know what a man of creative imagination could do in this art, if he once made the medium an essential part of his thought. Such pictures as "Dr. Caligari" and perhaps "The Golem," have given some notion of the direction the art may take; but one may only guess at such cosmic possibilities as those of colours that change and scenery that moves, in harmony or in conflict with the struggles and passions of the actors.

Leaving all such matters to the artists whom time may bring forth, we turn now for a moment to a second difficulty which stands in the way of the development of a genuine art of the cinema. Obviously this art is, or will be, unlike those of painting, sculpture, and literature, and similar to those of music and the theatre, in that the act of creation is not the act of any individual composer or playwright, but must be shared and completed by directors, by makers of investiture, and by actors, all of whom should be full partners in creation.

To anyone who has taken any sort of interest in the motion-picture, it is obvious that just as the producers eliminate the earlier part of the creative process by borrowing their material, so they commonly repress any later manifestation of the creative impulse by subjecting their troupes to a thoroughly mechanical technique of production. From all accounts, it appears that the players have about as little freedom as the stage-hands and the adapters of scenarios. Frequently the actor has not the faintest notion of the content of the play as a whole. He may be required to appear successively in episodes selected at random from one play, or from several plays, and lumped together solely for convenience in production. He "registers," rather than acts, his part, scene by scene, gesture by gesture, in accordance with directions bawled at him from the side-lines, and often without the slightest notion of the place that his bit of work will have in the mosaic—or crazy-quilt—of the completed film.

Thus it seems to us that the obvious mechanical qualities of the motion-picture may be quite properly attributed, not to the limitation of mechanical registration and reproduction, but to mechanical adaptation and production in the first instance. It is for the votaries of the art of the cinema to say whether or not they will accept to the full the inert medium that has been given them, and raise it from the dead with a touch of the quickening spirit.

### THE BEST WAY WITH CONVENTIONS.

THE other day I attended a national convention in my own line of work. I have been attending such gatherings for many years, and as usual I found myself bored almost to extinction by addresses, the substance of which in one form or another I had heard and read a dozen times before. To go to that convention meant a thousand-mile trip for me, but my board of directors considered it necessary that I should attend. "It's a good investment," they assured me; "you must keep in touch with the new ideas that are developing." My contention that the investment was a questionable risk was brushed aside. Even if there were not so many new ideas to be picked up, the meetings, I was told, would at least be "inspirational"—a handy word, but one that is often quite meaningless. In view of the fact that it is one of my duties to attend these conventions, I could not very well refuse to go, even though I believe that I could do more for my organization by staying at home.

Though I may be wrong, it is my honest opinion that a considerable number of the delegates attending that convention regarded it very much as I did. Some of them had travelled even farther than I had. Some of them, of course, were glad to come—it meant a vacation with all expenses paid. It meant several days at the seashore, with side trips to "points of interest" in the neighbourhood, a visit to the great metropolis and a stop-over with friends on the way

home. It meant a taste of hotel life, with the illusion for a while of being men and women of leisure; and it meant many other pleasurable excitements, varied according to each person's tastes.

Of one thing, however, I am sure; the organizations represented at that convention did not earn any very high rate of interest on the money that they had invested in their delegates' trip. Not that the delegates were not conscientious; on the contrary, they were almost painfully conscientious. They attended all the meetings, straggling in late like reluctant schoolboys it is true, but nevertheless they were always there—which is greatly to their credit, for there was no one to check them up and they could have played "hookey" with perfect impunity. Furthermore, they nearly all took notes of the proceedings with untiring industry, filling page after page with choice excerpts from the various speeches, blissfully indifferent to the fact that they will wonder what those notes mean when they come across them months hence in a forgotten pigeon-hole. But being honest men and women, they felt that somehow they had to justify their employers' investment in the trip. So they took notes.

Yet nearly everybody at that convention, except the few first-timers, had heard the substance of all that was said in those addresses again and again. Most of the delegates knew well enough that they could have remained in their offices at home and could have read in pamphlets, magazines and books most of the things that they were listening to. Yet many of them had come a thousand miles or more to listen to the repetition of these same things by speakers whose ability to present their facts entertainingly was generally in inverse ratio to their knowledge of the subject. But of course speakers and delegates did the best they knew how. In all their speeches they advised one another to co-operate and correlate. Those were key-words. All difficulties would be overcome, it seemed, when everybody was co-operating and everything had been correlated.

I am not quarrelling with those admirable sentiments. It is very excellent advice I am sure. But for a dozen years at least those same two words have been flung at my head by wearisome speakers holding thick typewritten sheets before them; and I had a strong impression that I was not the only man in that convention for whom those fateful words had a rather stale taste.

The speeches we had to listen to would have been of considerable value to the general public, had the general public been there to hear them. But the general public was on the beach or on the board walk or in the picture-show down the street. The theory that helps to keep these affairs going is that the speeches will be reported in the newspapers and that in this way the general public will absorb the information which is poured out upon the delegates. But as a matter of fact, the real "meat" of the addresses is seldom printed in the papers. We all know how newspaper-reporters work. They are too busy to attend the routine-meetings of such conventions so they corner one of the officials and pump him for information. Nine times out of ten, however, these officials are too busy to listen to the speeches and so the reporter gets his stuff at second-hand from some one else who got it at second-hand.

It has often struck me that it would be a good idea if people were compelled to attend conventions that are out of their own particular lines of work—that is, if doctors were sent to a convention of undertakers, and vice versa; if lawyers attended a convention of Sunday-school teachers, and vice versa; if engineers were to attend a convention of musicians and vice versa. Think of the opportunities for real education in such a system!

As a matter of fact, I carried out this idea on my last convention-trip, although I confess I did not dare to tell my board of directors about it. There happened to be four other conventions in town during the week when my own crowd had come together to talk about the advantages of "co-operating" and "correlating"; and so, having attended a couple of our own meetings, I went, thereafter, to the others.

One of these conventions was a gathering to discuss labour and industrial questions. All that I heard there was more or less new to me. My interest in the speeches was real, not perfunctory, and I gained a better understanding of the psychology that underlies our labour-troubles.

Across the street I discovered that a convention of spiritists was in session. My attendance at their meetings has not by any means converted me to spiritism; but I discovered, at least, that spiritists have minds like the rest of us. Some of them may be muddle-headed, but so are most people, in one way or another. The delegates in that hall appeared to me to be sensible people, thoroughly in earnest. Those two

conventions were clear gain to me; they widened my sympathies and increased my knowledge of life.

In addition to the foregoing, a convention of educators was in session. This was more in my own line, and I did not get very much out of it. I observed that here, too, the speakers were again earnestly "co-operating" and "correlating." I attended only one of the meetings and then went back to the spiritists. Not that I mean to depreciate the educators; they merely were not different enough from my own crowd to make their convention worth while for me. They would have been just the people for the spiritists to listen to—and vice versa.

At the end of the week I went home feeling that my convention-trip, for the first time in many years, had been worth while. The meetings I had attended had been "inspirational" in a real sense. I came back to work with my mind refreshed.

"Do you feel repaid for your trip?" asked the chairman of my board of directors.

"With compound interest!" I replied truthfully, and with so much enthusiasm that the others looked slightly startled—but they did not ask for particulars.

"I told you so," said the chairman; "it pays to keep in touch."

I smiled and let it go at that.

ARNOLD MULDER.

### THE NEGRO CONQUEST OF FRANCE.

At the sessions of the Pan-African Congress of September last, which were held in Paris, there was revealed, as between the English-speaking Negroes on the one hand, and the French-speaking Negroes on the other, a significant difference of attitude. Behind that difference lies a fact destined possibly to play an important rôle in future world-politics. The press has given quite inadequate attention to the matter, which, I feel, is sufficient reason for dealing with it here.

The nature of the difference between the two groups of Negroes may be indicated by this: The English-speaking group habitually spoke of themselves as "we Negroes," while those from French territory spoke of themselves as "we Frenchmen." This means that France has managed to make these dark people French alike in spirit and feeling, as well as in law; America and Great Britain have presumably not succeeded to anything like the same degree.

This fact at least does great honour to France—as one or two French papers did not fail at the time to imply: "This is how our Negroes feel," said one paper. "What of yours?" It is not, however, what may be called the merely moral or sentimental aspect of the fact which should interest us, but certain far-reaching political possibilities.

The nature of those possibilities was revealed by the divergence of policy which necessarily went with this divergence of attitude. Coloured people of English or American citizenship conceived of their problem as that of the assertion or defence of Negro rights against their violation by white people. The English-speaking coloured man seemed to look to community of action among coloured folk as a hope against white oppression everywhere. In the last resort, it was a question for them of Black versus White. French Negroes, however, had a different conception of policy, or tactic. The discussion at the Paris meeting revealed the fact that in the minds of the more astute French Negro there was another possibility, another tactic: that of using white against white as a means of protecting Negro interest, of asserting Negro right; and something which, at first thought, may seem fantastic enough, became less fantastic as the discussion developed. This emerged in some degree in the public sessions, but very much more so in private discussion

of a subject like the conscription of African natives for European military service.

The systematic training of the black millions of Africa to make war upon the white Powers of Europe no doubt has possibilities sufficiently disturbing when looked at from the purely white point of view; but it is naturally the business of Negro leaders to look at it from the Negro point of view.

For French officials to go into equatorial forests, capture primitive savages who do not know the difference between one European nation and another, take them from their villages and women-folk, and transport them to Europe to kill Russians on the frontiers of Poland, or Germans in the West, is something dangerously like the re-introduction of slavery for military purposes. That Frenchmen, animated by memories of old hatreds of the German, vowing the redemption of Alsace, should consent to conscription for themselves with a cry of "*Vive la France!*" is one thing; to drag from his native river some tribesman who has never heard of Alsace or "*La Marseillaise*," or 1870, and compel him to kill or be killed in the white man's quarrel is another thing altogether; and one would suppose that spokesmen of the Negro race would as a matter of principle fight this new slavery tooth and nail.

But not at all. The refusal of French Negro leaders to object to this policy was made on very plausible grounds indeed. The exceptionally able men who stood as the representatives of the Negro conscripts, and who had indeed co-operated in rendering African conscription a success, put a case which sharply recalled to English-speaking Negroes the differences of attitude between the two groups. "We are Frenchmen," said the French Negroes in effect. "If Frenchmen in Normandy and Brittany and Provence are subject to conscription, should Frenchmen of Guadeloupe or Senegal be excepted? You say those men do not understand the causes of the war. Do all the Normandy peasants? But, you say, the Normandy peasants are prepared to stand with their fellow-citizens, to be guided by their leaders. So also are the Senegalese."

This, it will be said, is a little too naïve. It is a "case" with which the French Government has indoctrinated these Negro leaders, and they have allowed themselves to be "nobbled" or "bought" in one fashion or another. If, however, they have been bribed, it almost certainly has not been with money or office. The feeling of these Negroes that they are Frenchmen is sincere enough, and they have passed on to their own people their quite genuine sentiment.

They have come to that sentiment mainly, of course, by virtue of one great central moral fact in the relationship of Frenchman and Negro: namely, that there is in that relationship, relatively speaking, no colour-line. It would be true to say, speaking broadly, that the Negro living in France is all but unaware of the monstrous shadow that darkens every hour of the Negro's life in Anglo-Saxon communities. In France, the Negro members of the Chamber of Deputies, or of the legal profession, or of the governmental administration, or of the Army and the Church, have not merely no official difficulties, they have no social difficulties, in their relationship with their white colleagues. They dine in the homes of members of the Cabinet, plead for white clients in the courts, and it would never even occur to their French colleagues to treat them with any sort of social exclusion. In other words, these Negroes do really feel themselves to be Frenchmen, and so come to regard as irrelevant all the talk of the

suffering and hardship of the African torn away from his home to fight in Europe.

When have men under the empire of national feeling ever resented the sacrifice of national war? The popularity of those who uphold the policies that must end in war, show that men in the mass do not mind suffering, torture, death, if only it be for the purpose of victory "for our side." The French adoration of Napoleon, still fierce and strong after more than a hundred years, is quite unaffected by the fact that he brought upon millions of Frenchmen during whole generations a great ocean of agony and suffering for an object which was never achieved, and which the whole Western world combined to make impossible. For objects like that for which Napoleon strove, men do not mind being killed. Therefore the eloquent and cultured black leader from Senegal, a member of the inner circles of the French Government, takes small account of what conscription may mean in terms of moral and physical damage to his race.

Here we come to the point which is the objective of this article: if the Negro leader is forced, he gives what, despite all his Frenchification, is perhaps his real justification to his own conscience as a Negro, for the policy he supports. This justification was not expressed in so many words, but was implicit in much that was said publicly at the recent Pan-African Congress, and was explicit in what was freely said privately. If some of the French Negro leaders were to express their whole thought, I am pretty sure it would have run something like this:

The English-speaking Negro insists that the Negro is suffering great wrongs throughout the world at the hands of the white race. That is perfectly true. But why are the Negro's rights treated with this contempt? Because he is powerless. The white is ruler because he has an unquestioned, overwhelming preponderance of force. He will never treat us Negroes on a basis of equality until we can defend ourselves. How can we defend ourselves? By a Negro combination, the solidarity of the black race? It is a dream. It will be centuries before we can have such solidarity or such organization. But there is a great instrument of power which can be used for the defence of Negro interest and right within our reach, if we play our cards properly. That instrument is the political and military power of France. We possess in African conscription the wherewithal to bargain for the placing of French power—and France is the predominant military State in the world—on the side of Negro right. Let us look at a few facts. The French army is already one-third Negro. The birth rate of France is stationary. But the birth rate of the Negro is not stationary. There is one way and one way only by which France can maintain a permanent parity of power with her age-long enemy, Germany, and that is with the help of the African Negro. We Negroes, therefore, hold the balance of power in the greatest quarrel in Western civilization. France can maintain the hegemony of Europe thanks only to what her own military writers have called "*la force noire*." She is coming to a time when the preponderance of her military power will in fact rest upon the Negro. What more could we ask as an instrument for securing our rights in the world? France shall be our spokesman among the white Powers. When, on the next occasion, a coloured nation, whether Asiatic or African, demands as a principle, say, of the League of Nations, the recognition of racial equality, and when some new Mr. Wilson, as the protagonist of democracy, chooses to oppose that principle, then France shall stand upon it. She shall stand upon it because that will be the one condition of her being able to put any reliance upon her largest military raw material. In any vital Negro question, this greatest of the military Powers will support us. Is this, then, the time to withhold the military co-operation of our people, the black population of France? Any true conception of the best policy for us Negroes would be to extend Negro conscription to the utmost possible extent, to make it as indispensable as possible. Even America had to consider the Negro when she needed him for war. As long as the need lasted, we heard about better treatment of the Negro; his grievances were at last going to be set right. Of course when the need passed the temper changed. France is pursuing a policy

which, to a much larger degree, will make her need of us permanent. The coloured Empire of Great Britain—India for example—has now come to be, not a source of strength, but a source of weakness for Britain. She will have to take troops from the European fields to keep her coloured people in order. France will be able to bring her coloured troops to the European fields. France will be good to us. Her people have not the ingrained colour-prejudice to get over. They never had it; and as their need of us grows, they never will get it. We must ask a large price for our military support; and that is the greatest political asset of the Negro race to-day.

It is too early yet to say whether, from the Negro point of view, such a policy is feasible. It should be remembered, however, that for many years it has been a deliberate policy on the part of France to develop *la force noire* as a counterbalance to German fecundity.

Now for a foot-note to this. On the morrow of attending the Pan-African Congress in Paris, I had occasion to visit Strasburg, to the liberation of which so many tens of thousands of the youth of France gave their lives. On a sunny Sunday morning I found my way to the great municipal baths, a legacy of the German occupation. On coming out, an attempted short-cut back to my hotel landed me within a hundred yards of a street in which the following scene was being enacted: Under the summer sun, long queues of Negroes, hundreds of them, were lining up, in orderly fashion, outside the doors of certain houses. From time to time a few Negroes emerged from those houses, a few more were admitted and the doors were closed, those outside waiting patiently their turn. Through this street wandered Alsatian children, girls and boys, watching a spectacle, which, after all, must be an inevitable incident of the age in which the new Africa will come to the aid of old France. For those houses, outside the doors of which the Negroes were waiting, were brothels, and inside were white girls, the Liberated Daughters of France.

NORMAN ANGELL.

#### AGAINST BEING CONVINCED.

ONE of the worst effects of the philosophical belief in the Absolute has not been noted perhaps as definitely as it might have been had students of philosophy been psychologists, or psychologists students of philosophy. The belief that reason is absolute has encouraged men to pass their lives without intermittance in thought; to transform themselves into minds which can do nothing but reason, and, worse still, which can not cease to reason and lapse into their natural vacancy. The philosopher is a man who thinks in and out of season; and this is sufficient cause why to popular eyes he should appear to be in a sense unnatural, even monstrous, for the monstrous is simply what does not observe its proper time, and above all, therefore, what is timeless. Now, if we could imagine the very opposite of this philosopher! He would be a thinker whose characteristic attribute, so unusual in this context as to appear paradoxical, would be an incredible simplicity, a spontaneity which would appear to be a piece of nature's carelessness. The "problems" of philosophy would not exist for him. He would affirm, without thinking, the antitheses of all philosophical truths. It would seem to him a truism that whatever lives unchanged in all seasons has no season; and he would have enough of the wisdom of nature to know that without its season there can be no fruit. He would not be, like other philosophers, a man who makes it a point of honour to think at all times; philosophy would be to him the autumn of his spiritual year, an

autumn in which all the unquiet growth and acrid green heaviness of the summer would dissolve and breathe itself out, becoming painless and lovely, and leaving him free. His thoughts would fall down, light and cold, but stored with the memory of a hundred suns. Philosophy would be to him a moment of involuntary light-heartedness, of golden sterility and emptiness, an escape from all the earnestness and solemnity of the passions.

There is about this process so little thoroughness, so little morality, that it must appear outrageous to all thinkers; but then, there may be no reason at all why thought should be either thorough or moral. The modern habit of sincerity, taken over from science, the attitude of serious, unsophisticated "acceptance" and inquiry, makes an assumption so naïve that one can refuse with a good conscience to believe in it; the assumption, namely: that life is as sincere as the questioner, and that she will give a serious answer to a serious question. There exist wayward and profound beings, and life may be like these, who become more wayward when the earnest soul interrogates them "in good faith"; they know he unconsciously tries to seduce them into a sincerity like his own, and they deceive him in sheer self-defence. Good nature and honesty, in spite of their apparent disinterestedness, are insidious qualities; if a man possesses them he thinks he is entitled to demand them in return from every one and everything else, even from nature. We are sincere, in the end, as a sort of invitation to other people to be sincere. But what if nature should not acknowledge the validity of sincerity at all?

If a man speaks impressively, he speaks the truth: that is a conclusion drawn more frequently than we imagine. And that is natural, for every man who discovers a truth immediately acquires a shade of solemnity. The priests who, whatever their virtues, sin enough to have a little knowledge of psychology, know that it is never their truths but their seriousness which convinces the masses. In consequence—it is a piece of worldly wisdom which deserves the highest admiration—they have exalted seriousness if not to an art, to a technique, by means of which they can be more apocalyptically and successfully serious than any other human organization. If we look too carefully into the attitude of seriousness, we will find, it is true, a small stupidity and a big hypocrisy; for when a man is solemn he is nine times out of ten unconsciously trying to persuade himself that he is much nearer to the truth than he is in reality, so near the truth, in fact, that he is a little dazzled, a little confused, and does not know what he believes or what he sees. There is, of course, no insincerity involved in being in that state; but, quite simply, one should not disguise it as seriousness and virtue. And one would not if one did not unconsciously desire by means of it to enhance one's power.

To free oneself from the bondage of the seriousness of others, and also from one's own, frivolity is necessary; and certain truths can not be known unless we are frivolous enough to conceive them. All philosophers, except perhaps the English and the German, have a vein of frivolity, a detachment pushed to carelessness, which permits, or, rather, enables them—for it is an attainment—to discuss the greatest matters, God, Immortality, though perhaps not the Absolute (their *amour-propre* is too deeply involved there), entirely without preference, and as if the issue did not matter: the name given to this rare mood is intellectuality. There is a moment of freedom sometimes vouchsafed the intellect, when its movement is mere

play, and when it exercises itself for its pleasure and to enjoy its own suppleness and strength. That has been thus far the highest moment of philosophy, in which all its seriousness and yearning have dissolved into mere laughter and paradox.

But that, of course, is not the moment of philosophy which is "trusted" even by philosophers. There seems to be a disposition among philosophers—and among men—not to accept any truth which is not forced upon them. But how much there is to be distrusted in this disposition and the truths which it admits! The searcher for the truth thinks that if he uses the following method he will be successful. He brings before him the question "What is truth?" and he considers the answers one after another, rejecting them all until there is only one left; this he accepts because there is no other hypothesis. Now, what is one to think of this? Are we entitled to trust a man so unresourceful, so dull, and so well-meaning? Are we justified in crediting him with sufficient judgment even to reject errors? In the end we can only say to him "Yes, you have worked yourself into a position in which you have no choice but to surrender to an imperative truth. But that does not mean that it is *the* truth: it only means that you can go no further. Perhaps some one else—?" But a philosopher who has laboured so badly as to land himself in a *cul-de-sac* will never be convinced that the truth is not in it along with him.

It is a sign of the constancy of human hypocrisy that in speaking of truth, the one subject demanding rigid sincerity, men deceive themselves as sentimentally as they do in speaking of anything else. For example, they will not admit that it is as important to them that they should like a truth as that a truth should be true. Yet it is, of course, the case; and there is in the unconditional praise of truth something intellectually indecent; for what, in the first place, has the truth to do with rhetoric, and whither, in the second, has the self-knowledge of the philosopher flown when he asserts that he loves all truth? "Truth though the heavens fall" is a piece of mere sublimity; and all that a philosopher who knows himself would dare to say, and then he would think twice, and smile, and perhaps not say it after all, would be "My truth though the heavens fall." But these attitudes are not even idle; they are ridiculous and uninteresting at the same time.

The slavery which men of thought impose upon themselves—they would like to believe that it is tragic, but it is not even tragic-comic—is such as only a paradoxical, and therefore a foolish, a clever and therefore a stupid, animal could imagine or achieve. What is it, this tragedy of thought, with which so many modern memoirs and philosophies ring? It is something which as a matter of living, as an elementary exercise in *savoir faire*, is foolish. A man insists upon carrying on his shoulders a thought which is too heavy for him, which is not to his taste, and which irks him at every turn. Or, almost as disastrously, he lives habitually with a household of truths with whom he is not really on speaking terms. This spiritual lackey, who, possessing no truth, surrounds himself with truths out of a desire to be intellectually furnished, but eventually finds that he can not use them, and that they exhaust him, is, one almost dares to say, the flower of modern culture. It tires one, this roomful of awkward truths; it even disillusioned one, so that one can not regard the labour of culture as a spiritual tragedy. Perhaps by means of it one acquires merit, but only those who can desire nothing else desire anything so meritorious as merit. The wisest plan with a truth

which is not to one's taste is not to hold it. There is no reason why one personally should hold to all the truths that are known, and there are many reasons why one should not.

Before truth, as before everything else, one should be on guard against the traditional failing of man: to fall down incontinently in worship. To anyone who values his freedom, his grace of intellectual movement, for that is the end of freedom in thought, a truth does not become good because it has behind it all the authority of logic and forces itself upon the mind: on the contrary, that is the strongest argument against it. All the truths which a man holds should be refutable; and he should be able, above all, to refute them himself, in order to escape from them when he pleases. We return for ever only to the thoughts from which we can take a holiday of a lifetime. This is what makes doubt the highest of the intellectual virtues. I do not mean "honest doubt"; there is no particular virtue in that; dishonest doubt is just as serviceable. But without doubt we could never escape either from truth or from ourselves, and life is unphilosophical to the extent that it is an eternal escape.

Dialectic is the great instrument of intellectual tyranny: and that is the last argument against it: logic, as Nietzsche observed, is essentially nihilistic. Yet, by the righteousness of its methods it has acquired a respectable reputation, which works in the most potent and unexpected ways for its sovereignty. For example, it is now accounted so honourable that when a man begins to argue we immediately begin to believe in him. Yet we should, of course, be more than usually shy; for his need to employ argument implies two things, that the truth which he seeks to establish is not obviously true, and that he wishes to force us to believe it. Our faith in dialectic arises partly from our belief that no one will try by means of logic to prove anything if he can not do it, and partly from our desire to believe in something or other, this or that; and this will serve. For such reasons, and not for the reasons adduced by the dialectician, we are convinced in the most difficult and knotty controversies. We trust most of all the man who lures us into beliefs which we do not foresee, who, like Socrates, bids us follow "wheresoever our inquiry will take us": and that is bad psychology, for there is something which ordains what the direction shall be, the desires of the dialectician himself. Let us be honest. We should only trust the man who sets down his thoughts a little disconnectedly, and leaves them to speak for themselves; to shine, if they have life in them, and if they have not, to remain obscure.

All reason leads finally to folly; there is no final reason, for reason is not final. Any theory of logic, to be valid, must therefore be born outside of logic; and as whatever is outside logic is irrational, the critic of reason must be folly. We need a theory of thought from the standpoint of folly even if it be only to set thought free; for thought, as every modern philosophy proclaims, discovers in the end, alas, nothing but thought. A theory of thought from the standpoint of folly, however, is still too difficult for us; we are too wise; and all that one can do is to set down a few guesses, as wild as possible, at the laughing philosopher. In doing so, one is on such improbable ground that one can be unconditionally idle and unconditionally serious. Well, let us imagine what will be the qualities of a thinker of this kind. The "questions" of philosophy will not exist for him; and in all questions therefore he will be against both sides. He will not run after truths, and when he has caught one, use

it as a staff, even if it is fashioned in the convenient shape of a cross; on the contrary, he will try to escape from the truths which come to him, and only if he can not shake them off accept them as his own. He will try not to speak the truth, so that the truth may the more clearly speak out of him; for he will not trust unconditionally anything that is self-conscious, but only what is unconscious of itself. He will not strive to be profound, but to escape from his own profundity and to remain on the surface, knowing that it is the duty of everything to attain its form, its peculiar beauty. He will love time more than eternity, for eternity will appear to him to be only time plus monotony. But one must stop. Still, who will deny that such a man, if he were possible, would be our judge and deliverer?

EDWIN MUIR.

### THE GESTURE OF CASTILE.

#### VII

"LYÆUS, you've found it."

"Her, you mean."

"No, the essence, the gesture."

"I carry no butterfly-net."

The sun blazed in a halo of heat about their heads. Along both sides of the straight road olive trees contorted gouty trunks as they walked past. On a bank beside a quietly grazing donkey, a man was asleep wrapped in a brown blanket. Occasionally a little grey bird twittered encouragingly from the telegraph-wires. When the wind came there was a chill of winter and wisps of cloud drifted across the sun and a shiver of silver ran along the olive groves.

"Tel," cried Lyæus after a pause, "maybe I have found it. Maybe you are right. You should have been with me last night."

"What happened last night?" As a wave of bitter envy swept over him, Telemachus saw for a moment the face of his mother, Penelope, brows contracted with warning, white hand raised in admonition. For a fleeting second the memory of his quest brushed through the back of his mind. But Lyæus was talking.

"Nothing much happened. There were a few things. O, this is wonderful!" He waved a clenched fist about his head. "The finest people, Tel! You never saw such people, Tel. They gave me a tambourine. Here it is; wait a minute." He placed the bag he carried on his shoulder on top of a milestone and untied its mouth. When he pulled the tambourine out it was full of figs. "Look, pocket these. I taught her to write her name on the back; see—Pilar. She didn't know how to write."

Telemachus involuntarily cleared his throat.

"It was the finest dive. Part house, part cave. We all roared in and there was the funniest little girl. Lot of other people, fat women, but my eyes were in a highly selective state. She was very skinny with enormous black eyes, doe's eyes, timid as a dog's. She had a fat pink puppy in her lap."

"But I meant something in line, movement, eternal, not that."

"There are very few gestures," said Lyæus.

They walked along in silence.

"I'm tired," said Lyæus. "At least let's stop in here. I see a bush over the door."

"Why stop? We are nearly there."

"Why go on?"

"We want to get to Toledo, don't we?"

"Why?"

"Because we started for there."

"No reason at all," said Lyæus with a laugh as he went in the door of the wine-shop.

When they came out they found Don Alonso waiting for them, holding his horse by the bridle. "The Spartans," he said with a smile, "never drank wine on the march."

"How far are we from Toledo?" asked Telemachus. "It was nice of you to wait for us."

"About a league, five kilometres, nothing. I wanted to see your faces when you first saw the town. I think you will appreciate it."

"Let's walk fast," said Telemachus. "There are some things one does not want to wait for."

"It will be sunset and the whole town will be on the *paseo* in front of the hospital of San Juan Bautista. This is Sunday of *Carnaval*; people will be dressed up in masks and very noisy. It's a day on which they play tricks on strangers."

"Here's the trick they played me at the last town," said Lyæus agitating his bag of figs. "Let us eat some. I'm sure the Spartans ate figs on the road. Will Rosinante—I mean will your horse eat them?" He put his hand with some figs on it under the horse's mouth. The horse sniffed noisily out of black nostrils dappled with pink and then reached for the figs. Lyæus wiped his hand on the seat of his pants and they proceeded.

"Toledo is symbolically the soul of Spain," began Don Alonso after a few moments of silent walking. "By that I mean that through the many Spains you have seen and will see runs everywhere an undercurrent of fantastic tragedy: Greco on the one hand, Goya on the other, Morales, Gallegos, a great flame of despair amid dust, rags, ulcers, human life rising in a sudden pæan among desolate, abandoned, dun-coloured spaces. To me, Toledo expresses the supreme beauty of that tragic farce. And the apex, the victory, the deathlessness of it is in El Greco. How strange it is that it should be that Cypriote who lived in such Venetian state in a great house near the abandoned synagogue, scandalizing us austere Spaniards by the sounds of revelry and unabashed music that came from it at meal-times, making pert sayings under the nose of humourless visitors like Pacheco, living solitary in a country where he remained to his death, misunderstood and alien and where two centuries thought of him, along with Don Quixote, as a madman, who should express most flamingly all that was imperdurable in Toledo. I have often wondered whether all that fiery vitality of spirit that we feel in El Greco, that we felt in my generation when I was young, that I see occasionally in the young men of your time, has become conscious only because it is about to be smothered in the great advancing waves of European banality. I was thinking the other day that perhaps states of life only became conscious once their intensity was waning."

"But most of the intellectuals I met in Madrid," put in Telemachus, "seemed enormously anxious for subways and mechanical progress; seemed to think that existence could be made perfect by slot-machines."

"They are anxious to hold stock in the subway and slot-machine enterprises that they may have more money to un-Spanish themselves in Paris. But let us not talk of that. From the next turn in the road, round that little hill, we shall see Toledo." Don Alonso jumped on his horse, and Lyæus and Telemachus doubled the speed of their stride.

First above the bulge of reddish saffron striped with the dark of a ploughed field, they saw a weathercock, then under it the slate cap of a tower. "The Alcázar," said Don Alonso. The road turned away and olive trees hid the weathercock. At the next bend, the towers were four, strongly buttressing a square building whereon the western windows glinted reflections of sunset. As they walked, more towers, dust-coloured, and russet domes and the spire of the cathedral, greenish, spiky like the tail of a pickerel, jutted to the right of the citadel. The road dipped again, passed some white houses where children sat in the doorways while from the inner rooms came a sound of frying oil and a pungence of cistus-twigs burning. Starting up the next rise that skirted a slope planted with almond trees, they caught sight of a castle with rounded towers built of rough grey stone joined by crenelated walls, rising into view occasionally behind the erratic lacework of angular twigs on which here and there a cluster of pink flowers had already come into bloom, as a

boat is now hidden and now raised against the sky by a ground swell. At the summit was a wine-shop with mules tethered against the walls; and below, the Tagus and the great bridge, and Toledo.

Against the grey and ochre-streaked theatre of the Cigarrales, were piled masses of buttressed wall that caught the orange sunset light on many tall, plane surfaces rising into crenelations and square towers and domes and slate-capped spires above a litter of yellowish tile roof that fell away in terraces from the highest points, and sloped outside the walls toward the river and the piers from which sprang the enormous arch of the bridge. The shadows were blue-green and violet. A pale cobalt haze of supper fires hung over the quarters near the river. As they started down the hill toward the heavy pile of San Juan Bautista that stood under its broad, tiled dome outside the nearest gate, a great volley of bell ringing swung about their ears. A donkey brayed; there was a sound of shouting from the town.

"Here we are, gentlemen! I'll look for you to-morrow at the *fonda*," shouted Don Alonso. He took off his hat and galloped toward the gate, leaving Telemachus and Lyæus standing by the roadside looking out over the city.

### VIII

BEYOND the zinc bar was an irregular room with nile-green walls into which light still filtered through three little round arches high up on one side. In a corner were some hogsheads of wine; in another, small tables with three-legged stools. From outside came the distant braying of a brass band and the racket of a street full of people, laughter, and the occasional shivering jangle of a tambourine. Lyæus had dropped on to a stool and spread his feet out before him on the tiled floor.

"Never walked so far in my life," he said. "My toes are pulverized, pulverized!" He leaned over and pulled off his shoes. There were holes in his socks. He pulled them off in turn, and started wiggling his toes meditatively. His ankles were grimed with dust.

"Well?" began Telemachus.

The *padron*, a lean man with moustaches and a fancy yellow vest which he wore unbuttoned over a lavender shirt, brought two glasses of dense black wine. "You have walked a long way?" he asked, looking with interest at Lyæus's feet.

"From Madrid."

"Carrai!"

"Not all in one day."

"You are sailors going to rejoin your ship in Seville?" The *padron* looked from one to another with a knowing expression, twisting his mouth so that one of the points of his moustache slanted toward the ceiling and the other toward the floor.

"Not exactly."

Another man drew up his chair to their table, first taking off his wide cap and saying gravely: "*Con permiso de ustedes*." His broad, slightly flabby face was very pale; the eyes under his sparse blond eyelashes were large and grey. He put his two hands on their shoulders so as to draw their heads together and said in a whisper: "You aren't deserters, are you?"

"No."

"I hoped you were. I might have helped you. I escaped from prison in Barcelona a week ago. I am a syndicalist."

"Have a drink," cried Lyæus. "Another glass! We can let you have some money if you need it, too, if you want to get out of the country."

The *padron* brought the wine and retired discreetly to a chair beside the bar from which he beamed at them with almost religious approbation.

"You are comrades?"

"Of those who break out," said Lyæus flushing. "What about the progress of events? When do you think the pot will boil over?"

"Soon or never," said the syndicalist. "That is, never in our lifetime. We are being buried under industrialism like the rest of Europe. Our people, our comrades even,

are fast getting the bourgeois mentality. There is danger that we shall lose everything we have fought for. You see, if we could only have captured the means of production when the system was young and weak, we could have developed it slowly for our benefit, made the machine the slave of man. Every day we wait makes it more difficult. It is a race as to whether this peninsula will be captured by communism or something of the sort, or capitalism."

"How long were you in prison?"

"Only a month this time, but if they catch me it will be bad. They won't catch me."

He spoke quietly, without gestures, occasionally rolling an unlit cigarette between his brown fingers.

"Hadn't we better go out before it gets quite dark?" said Telemachus.

"When shall I see you again?" said Lyæus to the syndicalist.

"O, we'll meet if you stay in Toledo a few days."

Lyæus got to his feet and took the man by the arm. "Look, let me give you some money. Won't you be wanting to go to Portugal?"

The man flushed and shook his head. "If our opinions coincided—"

"I agree with all those who break out," said Lyæus.

"That's not the same, my friend."

They shook hands and Telemachus and Lyæus went out of the tavern.

Two carriages hung with gaudily embroidered shawls, full of dominoes and pierrots and harlequins who threw handfuls of confetti at people along the sidewalks, clattered into town through the dark arches of the gate. Telemachus got some of the confetti in his mouth. A crowd of little children danced about him, jeering as he stood spluttering on the curbstone. Lyæus took him by the arm and drew him along the street after the carriages, bent double with laughter. This irritated Telemachus who tore his arm away suddenly and made off with long strides up a dark street.

A half-waned moon shone through the perforations in a round terra-cotta chimney into the street's angular, greenish shadow. From somewhere came the seethe of water over a dam. Telemachus was leaning against a damp wall, tired and exultant, looking vaguely at the oval of a woman's face half surmised behind the bars of an upper window, when he heard a clatter of unsteady feet on the cobbles, and Lyæus appeared, reeling a little, his lips moist, his eyebrows raised in an expression of drunken jollity.

"Lyæus, I am very happy," cried Telemachus stepping forward to meet his friend. "Walking about here in these empty, zigzag streets I have suddenly felt familiar with it all, as if it were a part of me, as if I had soaked up some essence out of it."

"Silly—that about essences, gestures, Tel, silly. . . . Awake all you need." Lyæus stood on a little, worn stone that kept wheels off the corner of the house where the street turned, and waved his arms. "Awake! *Dormitant animorum excubitor*. That's not right. Latin's no good. Means a fellow who says: wake up, you son of a gun."

"O, you're drunk. It's much more important than that. It's like learning to swim. For a long time you flounder about; it's unpleasant; gets up your nose. You choke. Then all at once you are swimming like a duck. That's how I feel about all this. The challenge was that woman in Madrid, dancing, dancing."

"Tel, there are things too good to talk about. Look, I'm like St. Simeon Stylites." Lyæus lifted one leg, then the other, waving his arms like a tight-rope walker.

"When I left you I walked out over the other bridge, the bridge of St. Martin and climbed."

"Shut up! I think I hear a girl giggling up in the window there." Lyæus stood up very straight on his column and threw a kiss up into the darkness. The giggling turned to shrill laughter; a head craned out from a window opposite. Lyæus beckoned with both hands.

"Never mind about them. Look out! Somebody threw something. O! it's an orange! I want to tell you how I

felt the gesture. I had climbed up on one of the hills of the Cigarrales and was looking at the silhouette of the town so black against the stormy marbled sky. The moon hadn't risen yet. Let's move away from here."

"*Viene flor de mi corazon,*" shouted Lyæus toward the upper window.

"A flock of goats was passing on the road below, and from somewhere came the tremendous lilt of—"

"Heads!" cried Lyæus throwing himself round an angle in the wall.

Telemachus looked up, his mind full of his mother Penelope's voice saying reproachfully, "You might have been murdered in that dark alley." A girl was leaning from the window, shaken with laughter, taking aim with a bucket she swung with both hands.

"Stop," cried Telemachus. "It's the other!"

As he spoke a column of cold water struck his head, knocked his breath out, drenched him.

"Speaking of gestures—" whispered Lyæus breathlessly from the doorway where he was crouching; and the street was filled with uncontrollable shrieking laughter.

JOHN DOS PASSOS.

## LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

### TRADE IS BRISK ACROSS THE RHINE.

SIRS: Trade is brisk across the Rhine. Here in France it is stagnation, in England it is stagnation plus unemployment, in Belgium and Italy ditto. But across the Rhine they are working hard and selling wholesale, and still they can not keep up with the demand. At the same time they are declaring that really they can not turn over to the Allies 675 million gold marks by the middle of January as the treaty and the schedule of payments say they must. They point to the prostrate mark, to the budget deficit. Everybody is asking: "Is Germany going to default?" Finally, the question becomes so insistent that the Reparations Commission sends its Guarantees Committee to Berlin to look over the field. It returns and reports to the extent of seventy odd pages, and forthwith the Reparations Commission decides to go to Berlin and see for itself. It has just come back. It says that Germany can pay and must pay. But how?

Well, first of all, there are credits to the value of many million gold marks held abroad by German exporters. The German Government must borrow these. That will suffice for the next two payments. If the mark continues its downward course, German exports should become cheaper and cheaper, and be able to get in under any tariff-wall yet devised by the wit of man. That means more foreign credits. Some day, however, the mark must cease falling, and after all there is that well-known fact that as the mark falls, prices rise in Germany, and that other well-known fact that somehow Germany must buy her raw material abroad in order to manufacture goods for export. Some day, then, this process of accumulating foreign credits by selling German goods dirt-cheap abroad must slow down and finally cease altogether. What then? Why, then, there will have to be loans abroad, based on German production or transport-systems. In other words, Germany must borrow from the Allies to pay the Allies. . . . Anyhow, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Let us concentrate for the time being on the January and February payments.

What will the Allies do with these payments when they get them? Truth to tell, they really don't know. There is the little matter of that first billion gold marks which they are still at odds over, though it was paid in by Germany three months ago. There are besides fifty billion gold marks worth of German bonds in the coffers of the Reparations Commission which have not yet been divided among the Allies because the basis of division is not yet entirely decided, and then anyhow there is no service of interest. So that doesn't matter much. These bonds consist of just two sheets of thick paper, on one of which Germany signs herself good for twelve billion gold marks at six per cent interest and on the other for thirty-

eight billion gold marks at the same rate. England and Belgium have each got about half of that first billion—provisionally—and will keep it till France confirms the arrangement; and France will confirm it, doubtless, when England approves the Wiesbaden Agreement whereby Germany consents to deliver goods to the value of seven billion gold marks to France in the next four years. That is just a little diplomatic bartering—like the bonds, not to be taken too seriously. But what must be taken seriously is the 675 million gold marks due at the beginning of the year.

Trade is brisk across the Rhine. Foreigners have even been forbidden to buy in Rhineland shops because they threatened to clean them out, samples and all, thanks to the benevolent mark at so much to the halfpenny and the centime and the cent. German furnaces are in full blast; German mills are working overtime. Meanwhile, men are walking the streets of London hungry and jobless, while in Paris the housewife cooks meat only once a week and complains that the cost of living won't come down. This is really too bad, it gets the Frenchman's goat, it makes him see red; and then people come along and tell him that Germany can't pay!

Why is trade so brisk across the Rhine? Because the mark has fallen. Then why not let the franc and the pound fall? Because it is the road to ruin. Why, then, is not Germany ruined? Because the first fruits of inflation are a certain kind of prosperity but the last fruits are infinitely bitter. Germany's day of reckoning will come, says the French statesman to the French people. Only wait and see. But if we wait and see and she is ruined, say the French people to the French statesman, how shall we get our money? This awkward question is unanswered save by M. Léon Daudet and the fire eaters. Start the army going, they say.

Doubtless the army will be set going sooner or later, to the full total of its 800,000 men. For if we go further back still and ask why Germany is challenging ruin, we shall perceive that it is because she doesn't care. She has signed a bill of 132 billion gold marks. She knows that to pay it off she will have to work hard for a generation or two just simply for that purpose. It's a game not worth the candle. Germany, therefore, has neither the intention nor the desire to pay.

Meantime, the ravaged acres of France wait in vain. What is rebuilt is rebuilt by French money at the cost of piling up a huge French debt. Yet there is reparation which Germany could and would have made, reparation which was clearly just and right, and altogether practicable. But on the bill that was presented by the Allies to Germany, it appeared as only one item among others; and when a debt is so big that one can never expect to pay it, one simply doesn't try to do so. It is human nature. The treaty of Versailles forgot human nature.

Which is really the ultimate reason why trade is so brisk across the Rhine—so annoyingly, aggravatingly, maddeningly brisk. I am, etc.,  
Paris, France.

CHARLES R. HARGROVE.

## MISCELLANY.

THE attitude of the average American newspaper towards art is amusingly—and discouragingly—revealed in the accounts which appeared in the New York press of the interview given by Dr. Richard Strauss on the occasion of his arrival on these shores a few weeks ago. It is evident that Dr. Strauss wished to speak to the reporters about his work as a musician, thinking, perhaps, that if Americans wanted to hear from him at all it would be on the subject on which he speaks with authority. But no, what the reporters wanted were his opinions of things in general. This, of course, is running true to American journalistic form. Does Mr. Henry Ford assemble the ideal cheap motor-car?—then the newspapers clamour for his views on the state of Europe. Does Mr. Edison invent a talking-machine?—then the newspapers will give him no rest till he has told them what he thinks about

university education or the causes of the next war to end war. Merely because a distinguished artist or scholar is willing to talk to a newspaper-man is no reason why his personality should be butchered to make a journalistic holiday. Professor Einstein is a case in point: the newspapers made a show of their ignorance in exploiting him as if he had been a moving-picture star instead of a scientist. As an incorrigible reader of newspapers it seems to me that the prime mistake that reporters make is in thinking that the public prefers a "story" to the facts.

IN the interview with Dr. Strauss to which I refer, the reporters grasped eagerly at the anecdotes which he related; they all carefully noted that his new ballet will bear a German title which means "Whipped Cream"; and several mentioned the fact that one of his questioners tried to secure from Dr. Strauss an expression of his opinion on the quality of beer in *post-bellum* Germany. Scandal and sensation are meat and drink to the modern newspaper-man. The reporters, however, are not wholly to blame, they take their cue from their circulation-hunting proprietors who instruct the employees to give no thought to reputations sacrificed on the altar of scare-heads. The efforts of those who would elevate the profession of journalism by training men and women in special university schools deserve respect and assistance; but it seems to me that it is vain to hope for any real improvement in our public press until the great body of newspaper-readers themselves raise the standard of their requirements. On the whole, we get the newspapers we deserve. As long as most people are content to regard their newspaper as something with which to pass the time that they spend in going to and from work, they but confirm the reporters, editors and owners in the complacency from which nothing on earth will arouse them—save a falling off in circulation.

RACHMANINOFF's recent performance of his second piano concerto with the New York Philharmonic Society gave us a welcome opportunity to examine the thought of a composer best known, perhaps, for his pictorial suggestiveness. On the evidence of such works as "The Island of the Dead," one would say that Rachmaninoff had dedicated his career as a composer to the proposition that symphonies should always be done in oils. It is otherwise with the concerto. Here his medium is prose: prose with all the finish we expect from so thorough a musician and all the colour put at his disposal by a fine talent for instrumentation. The concerto opens with a brief but characteristic prelude. This bears the mark of the composer in every bar. It seems to say, with a frightful glower and a portentously solemn delivery: "It is I, Rachmaninoff, who speaks." After this imposing gesture we wait with bated breath for the oracle, but we wait, apparently, in vain. The dark scowl and the threatening glare have all been a bluff. He has no forbidding truth to speak into our shrinking ears—he is just talking. His theme, clearly stated as far as it goes, still fails of definite utterance. It is restless, wondering, dissatisfied. Circumstance has forced Rachmaninoff into disquisition and he is not enough of a philosopher to find a ready way out. He never does find a really satisfactory way. There are moments, it is true, when he seeks relief from uncertainty by throwing himself with unreasoning abandon into action, but under the excited rhythms of these passages can be discerned the same want of positiveness. He says, in effect, that the answer is to step with the crowd—and step lively!—but he doesn't know where the crowd is going.

THE second movement of the concerto is pervaded by the same emotional quality. There is an elegiac episode which combines definite melodic outline incongruously with a hazy indefiniteness of mood. It is as if he were sorrowing for some dear departed friend, but isn't quite sure for whom—one has so many friends! The clarinet and the oboe add to the general uncertainty by the clever little way

they have of picking up a phrase and then letting it die away with a wistful upward inflection; they ask questions, but before there is time for an answer they have changed their minds and are off on a new tack. The first movement is effort not sure of its direction; the second is emotion not sure of its object: the finale is a partially successful attempt to escape from indecision. The elegiac phrase of the second movement is taken up by the full orchestra in a different key with such heightened effect as to show, for once, completely realized emotion. But soon there is the inevitable return to the rhythmic abandon of the first movement. That is the final resource: to fall in line and step with the crowd—step faster—and faster—it is forgetfulness, if not satisfaction.

RACHMANINOFF's writing for the orchestra, here as elsewhere, is superb. The very first impression one gets is of the skill with which the varied colours of the orchestra are blended with those of the solo instrument. This is the thing which makes him so admirable a tone-painter: it has nothing to do with the quality of his thought. In so thoroughly a psychologic work as the second piano concerto we are grateful for orchestral mastery only as we are grateful for resonant vocal timbre and smooth enunciation in an orator who is talking nonsense. In default of sense we take what pleasure we can in suavity. Rachmaninoff doesn't talk nonsense, but his thought is not up to the level of the technical excellence of his expression. A composer, I should say, who says little, but says it magnificently.

DURING the last two decades or so the criticism of our contemporary civilization has gone far to restore the balance against the toplofty conceit and provincialism of the nineteenth century. Out of this literature two essays, it seems to me, establish the position of the humanist and explain his attitude. One of these is Mr. Lowes Dickinson's "Letters from a Chinese Official," published in 1903. The argument of these letters is a familiar one, it is the essence of Matthew Arnold's "Culture and Anarchy"; Mr. Dickinson uses the flagrant imperialism of the West that snarled in behalf of "civilization" during the Boxer rebellion as point for a comparison between a mechanical culture, directed towards material conquests, and succeeding in terms of loot and power, and a humane culture whose end is the cultivation of a good society, in which every member may find the conditions necessary for his growth and has, moreover, the freedom to make use of them.

THE China of Mr. Dickinson's letters may, for all I know, be as mythical as the Persia of Montesquieu's "Lettres Persanes"; but the characteristics of the Western nations as he portrays them are bitingly familiar. One leaves Mr. Dickinson's polemic with the feeling that imperialism is an evil blight which is speedily bringing our civilization to disaster and ruin, and the conviction rises in one's mind that the revolution to be desired is one based not so much on the redistribution of material goods as upon the abandonment of material standards. Such an abandonment should not be very difficult for those communities that have been afflicted, in every economic organ, by the war; but without a genuine philosophy of personal abstemiousness—such as the Athenians once boasted—mere material deprivation is not likely to result in any sizable gains for art and literature and science; and such a philosophy has not, except in Russia, and perhaps in India, risen above the horizon.

THE other essay in this field is to be found under the title "Reafforestation" in Mr. John Eglinton's "Anglo-Irish Essays." Instead of paraphrasing its contents I prefer to quote outright one of its pregnant passages. Consider this: "For a long time to come we may expect that society will fall into two main parties or divisions, both looking to the State for their sanction, one acting in its name to secure revolutionary adaptations of so-

ciety to the pressure of its difficulties, the other regarding its own cause as nothing less than that of the maintenance of civilization, and succeeding periodically in arresting the precipitation towards anarchy. And nature—human nature—will find in neither of these parties, nor in both together, the plasticity and spontaneity required for the moulding of the future of man; it will rather find these in a third class which will meanwhile have arisen—consisting in the first case of those who have fallen away from social effort and public ambition, the 'intellectuals' as we call them at present, the 'incompetents,' and the increasing number of those who are appealed to by the ideal of self-culture, contemplation, and even asceticism. It is amongst these that a new idea might conceivably arise which might even lead ultimately to a new form of civilization. . . . It is an *idea* for which we wait. Without an idea man is frivolous, anarchic, dissatisfied, despicable. With an idea, the long-hoarded initiatives of his nature are liberated, he strains forward to new consummations, he 'did not know that he contained so much virtue.'"

JOURNEYMAN.

## THE THEATRE.

### THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM.

THERE is probably more reviewing of plays and less dramatic criticism in the columns of the New York newspapers than in the newspapers of any other capital city of the world. The presence of so much reviewing shows, certainly, a lively superficial interest in the playhouse, and is only to be deplored in so far as it tends to exaggerate the importance of a great deal that intrinsically merits only the briefest mention. But the absence of criticism is certainly regrettable, and equally so, perhaps, is the tendency both of newspaper-readers and newspaper-reviewers to consider this reviewing to be criticism, to fail themselves to realize that criticism is lacking. The reviewers are all known as dramatic critics, and would resent any other appellation. Yet one may scan their columns for weeks on end in a vain search for evidence that they merit the high title. Nor, indeed, is it any wonder, when night after night they must see and review new plays, and Sunday after Sunday concoct, or supervise the concoction of, whole pages of gossip, interviews, announcements, and the general slop of small beer known in newspaperdom as the Sunday theatrical department.

What is the difference between dramatic reviewing and dramatic criticism, and what are their respective functions?

Primarily, the reviewer is a reporter, and his function is to inform the public of the nature of the new play, reflecting its mood, its tone, and estimating its success in creating the response it seeks. The reviewer who fails thus to inform the public, misleading them instead, fails seriously, and is entitled to scant consideration. Obviously, for such a task, not every man is fitted, though it would sometimes appear that newspaper-editors believe he is. Really to reflect, in a newspaper-notice, the tone, the mood, of a play, a work of art, is no slight literary task, demanding both sensitiveness to aesthetic impressions and a rather delicate command of language. To estimate, further, the success of a play in creating the response which was its objective, demands an emotional alertness and sympathy at least the equal of the alertness and sympathy of the general theatre-goer, if not, indeed, of the author, and also a power of judgment to put aside any personal whims or prejudices and to see just what was the objective the author sought.

But, it will be objected, these things, especially perhaps this last thing, are required of the critic. Granted. A competent dramatic reviewer must have, I think, the

temperament and capacity of a critic. Nevertheless, his work can, and generally with us in America does, remain only reviewing, only more or less intelligent reporting of aesthetic matters.

To understand this seeming confusion, it may be easiest to consider criticism first from the standpoint of the impressionists, since their variety is the more in favour these days. In the moment of imaginative grasp of an author's conception, says Mr. Spingarn, taste and genius are one, critic and creator are one, an essentially comforting doctrine, by the way—for the critic! Criticism, then, consists in realizing exactly what the author tried to say, and recording whether he succeeded in saying it, or why he failed. Criticism, declared Anatole France in a famous passage, is the adventure of a soul among masterpieces. "I will now speak of myself, apropos of Molière," says the critic. Seeming at first to express quite different attitudes, actually these two critics are expressing the same attitude. Each asks the critic merely to expose himself to the work of art like a sensitized plate, and by developing and studying his negative as an astronomer studies his negative of the heavens, to report expertly upon it.

It would be ridiculous, however, to suppose that Anatole France used either the high word "masterpiece" or the rousing word "adventure" lightly, or that Mr. Spingarn would consider that the effort to discover what the author intended to express would result in criticism when the author had nothing to express. Though no one has ever satisfactorily defined what literature is, most people know roughly what it is, quite definitely drawing a line between the work which moves them by its revelation of a truth or a personality or a vision, and the work which has no inner and unique vitality. Among works of the former type, the critic's soul has adventures, the record of his response to such works is the record of how one personality affects another, by which indirection we arrive slowly at a clearer realization of the original stimulator. Among works of the latter type, the critic's soul can not adventure, and nothing whatever can result but reviewing, aye, though we send Anatole France himself to the playhouse.

Again, if the critic answers the question, "What has the author tried to express, and how has he succeeded?" we learn nothing that is new, we get no unique record from the finest critic on earth if in the play he attends the author has had nothing to express. It is as if we sent somebody to report on human conduct, and the only beings he could find were wooden soldiers.

Criticism, then, by the newer standards, must inevitably be determined not alone by the proper sensitivity of the critic, but by the presence or absence of literature, of the unique and true thing as opposed to the mechanical thing, to reflect. It must be fairly obvious, if this is so, that hardly once a month will dramatic criticism of this sort be possible in our theatre. For the rest, we shall have reviewing. This is by no means saying, of course, that we get it always, even when it is possible.

To turn for a moment to the older fashions of regarding criticism, let us take as a specific example of a play to be criticized Mr. Frank Craven's "The First Year," and imagine its being handled historically—for I am not assured that an exclusive devotion to impressionism makes for the general critical welfare. To trace, in "The First Year," its ancestry, to show how its style is a direct evolution from the rough, earlier American genre comedies, through the farces of Hoyt and the speedy and superficially realistic plays of Mr.

George M. Cohan, is to show how a dramatic literature is evolving in the popular theatre. A definite cause for the great popularity of "The First Year" lies just here—that it is not in any sense an exotic, an imitation of foreign models, but directly in the tradition of our popular theatre, and hence directly understandable to the average playgoer. This is also a definite merit. Criticism, along these lines, could perform a useful function both for public and playwrights, it could bring light and leading. But, loudly as "The First Year," has been acclaimed in the daily press, I have yet to see a truly critical article about it.

Take, again, Mr. Eugene O'Neill's new play, "Anna Christie," which invites either the most eloquent of impressionistic treatment, or fascinating analysis of its many points of interest. Impressionistically, the mood to be savoured is, perhaps, an adventure in pity. There is not, as the actors would say, an "unsympathetic" character in the play, yet there is not one character, either, who exemplifies the traditional virtues. Who could not adventure in such a paradox, and learn more about life? For critical analysis, the play offers extraordinary dialogue, which is at once brutally naturalistic and yet shot through with overtones of poetry. What is the secret? Again, the play has an unsatisfactory last act. To say so is reviewing. To say why, and thus to illumine the whole process of play-writing and the value of unity in a work of art is criticism; for a lack of exaltation in this final act commensurate with the exaltation of the wooing scene unquestionably has something to do with its effect of a mere conventional "happy ending," quite contrary to the author's intention. Still again, it would be a pretty critical problem to trace the Celtic element in Mr. O'Neill's work, to show how far it is a magic of poetry in his plays that has captured us, and not his grim naturalism at all. However, I can not pursue that investigation here. It ought to be the task of a critic who has two whole columns of a Sunday paper at his disposal.

The function of reviewing is useful and honourable, but it does not go far, at best feeding intelligent curiosity. The function of criticism, on the other hand, is as lofty as the function of art itself—of which, indeed, real criticism is a division. This function is in reality the same always, though the critics be as far apart in method and theory as Mr. Spingarn and Brunetière. It is the function not of appraising the thing criticized, but of interpreting it so that its significance becomes more apparent, its beauties more keenly felt, its worth as a unique expression of the mind of man, a personality more intelligently appreciated. The adventure of a soul among masterpieces is, in the end, but the reflection, through the critic's personality, of those masterpieces, and his criticism will have validity only in so far as his soul is fully sensitive to them, and his responses kindle greater understanding and the contagion of appreciation in us.

On the other hand, the most categorical "This won't do," of bow-wow review criticism, or the environmental and historical and analytic types, are worthless and a weariness to the flesh unless they explain to us more clearly the nature of the work criticized and breed in us a greater understanding and appreciation. Criticism of the drama as of any other branch of art, is not so much a handmaid of creation, as it is a creative energy itself, working with the drama as a subject to create the mood of understanding, enthusiasm, intelligent receptivity.

There can hardly be any question of its value, even of its necessity. Its absence from our daily press is something more than regrettable. It will, however, continue to be absent until the so-called critics are

relieved of the intolerable burden of incessant petty reviewing, and are free to devote their attention largely to the small number of significant plays, with room on Sunday to write as the spirit moves them, neither striving, as at present, to be "bright" at all costs, nor forced into a corner by large photographs of the female kneecap and endless silly twaddle which is the gossip of Broadway.

However, in all this I am, in effect, asking a revolution in our daily papers!

WALTER PRICHARD EATON.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS.

### "THE DARWINISM OF SOCIETY."

SIRS: In your issue of 21 December, Mr. Stanton A. Coblenz in his article, "The Darwinism of Society," developed a theme that ran something like this: human life is governed by the law of survival of the fittest; fitness under our social conditions being a compound of luck, unscrupulousness and money-getting, the inheritors and acquisitors of wealth are, through their inheritance or acquisition, best fitted to survive though they may be biologically unfit, and so "until the structure of society is altered fundamentally we may expect to be ruled over by those superior individuals, the economically fit and the biologically unfit."

Biological survival means reproduction, the bearing of progeny. Though not statistically supplied, I am under the impression that the economically disinherited among mankind are in the habit of surviving quite as effectively as the wealthier of the species.

Fittest means best adapted to survive, and the test of biological fitness is: survival. The proletarian father of three children who is killed in war at the age of thirty is infinitely "fitter" biologically than the oldest, wealthiest bachelor alive. Since the biologically unfit are those who do not survive and if, according to Mr. Coblenz, those who survive are the economically fit, how can the economically fit be the biologically unfit?

The trouble is, of course, that certain terms are invested with a meaning not their own. I am, etc.,  
New York City.

E. O. SALANT.

### THE CHRISTMAS PARDONS.

SIRS: The pardoning-power may be exercised as a personal prerogative of the executive, or as an authority to relieve imperfections in the administration of justice. It can hardly be doubted that in popular government the purpose is to provide relief for men and women who may have been falsely accused and convicted, or for those who by their conduct may have earned an earlier return to freedom than was prescribed by the terms of their sentences.

Undoubtedly the true intent is still observed in most instances. But it may be seriously doubted whether this intent of the law is the determining factor in what has come to be regarded as Christmas gifts in the form of executive pardons. These acts of executive clemency are accepted with general favour, because they appeal to a natural sentiment, and because they are brought to public attention at a season when there is no mood for analysis or criticism.

But what is their true significance? How often is clemency granted upon actual merit? That a large percentage of releases is well deserved may be admitted. But how often are otherwise troublesome cases thrown in for good measure? Every executive is importuned by powerful influences to release prisoners who on merit are not entitled to consideration. A reading of the published lists with scanty reference to the crimes committed, leaves little doubt that the Christmas atmosphere is often availed of to let slip through offenders who could not pass muster under normal conditions.

But, in other respects, the personal prerogative of the executive is unduly emphasized. Justice to the condemned, and not the whim of the executive should be the true test. A release should be granted when the prisoner has earned it, and not when the spirit moves His Highness to grant it. No deserving man or woman should be compelled to feel that he owes his release to official favour. Whole troops of convicts are released at Christmas, not because their redemption has then matured, but because our executive desires to give demonstration of his magnanimity on that day. His Highness extends his personal favour and forgiveness.

The King of England did not wait for Christmas to release Irish prisoners. He acted as soon as the delegates had affixed

their signatures to the proposed treaty. The King of England understands and has reason to respect the trend of the democratic movement. We are still enamoured of the name of democratic institutions. We do not recognize his Royal Highness when our eyes are upon him. Some day we may not know how to resent his lash when he lays it on. I am, etc.,

C. N.

#### MYTHOLOGICALLY SPEAKING.

SIRS: You have set yourselves to the valiant and useful task of skinning myth-makers and exploding myths. You do the job very well and I for one enjoy the fruits of your labours. But occasionally you fall into the habit of cherishing myths yourselves. After paying your respects to English and French statesmen as princely liars, you say in your issue of 21 December: "The Allied and Associated Powers offered Germany the Fourteen Points as terms of an armistice, and Germany capitulated on those terms." That is one of the most amusing myths of all history. You know or ought to know that German statesmen laughed at the Fourteen Points in theory and practice. You know or ought to know that Germany did not capitulate because she was offered and accepted the Fourteen Points. Germany capitulated because she was beaten. MM. Ludendorff and Scheidemann differed as to why Germany was beaten, but they agreed that the jig was up. The former laid the blame on the civilian population. The latter thought that the military crowd was responsible for the defeat. But defeat it was. After the defeat had arrived, the grand lovers of liberalism and humanity, MM. Ludendorff and von Hindenburg, thought they would save all they could by jumping behind the blessed Fourteen Points that had been manufactured for Russian consumption on Mr. P. T. B. Creel's suggestion. MM. George and Clemenceau laughed at the Fourteen Points. True. So did MM. Ludendorff and von Hindenburg. Also true. It is absurd to say that the Germans capitulated on the terms of the Fourteen Points. They capitulated because they were beaten and they got what they would have given their gallant foes had the tables been turned. While you are blowing up myths, make a good clean job of it. I am, etc.,

New York City.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

It seems to us that one might admit everything that Professor Beard says—which we do not, by any means—without touching the fact that Germany was offered the Fourteen Points as terms of an armistice and did capitulate on those terms. Such, to the best of our knowledge, was the fact; and hence we fail to see that we are cherishing a myth.

—EDITORS.

#### THE SACCO-VANZETTI CASE.

SIRS: The names of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, convicted of murder by a Massachusetts Court, have become a symbol the world over of the class-struggle. The claim is raised that, unless the verdict is reversed, it will be, not men accused of crime, but the judicial system of this country which will be convicted. No more grave challenge could be thrown down.

A pamphlet recently published by the Defence Committee, entitled "The Sacco-Vanzetti Case—Including an Analysis of the Trial," makes the facts on which this challenge rests, accessible to persons who have heretofore been without a basis for a rational judgment. It goes without saying that the facts are presented from a viewpoint sympathetic to the accused. But as one who personally attended the sessions of the trial, who heard the testimony first hand, who observed the witnesses upon the stand, and who has since carefully reviewed the transcript of evidence, I feel justified in expressing a judgment that, on the whole, the pamphlet presents a truthful view of the facts in the case; and I heartily commend its perusal to those whose sympathies have been aroused and who yet are at a loss how to take an intelligent attitude towards the matter. No summary can make clear the meagreness and the unsubstantial character of the evidence on which a verdict of guilty was based, nor the misreading of the psychology of the accused out of which the consciousness of guilt theory was woven which figured so large in the Government's case. The whole story, told against the background of the men's lives, must be read to reveal the monstrous miscarriage of Justice involved in the verdict.

An appeal for a retrial of the case has been refused by the judge who presided at the trial last summer. That was to have been expected. But an appeal to the Supreme Court is pending. Meanwhile, various clues are being followed, some of which it is understood have already unearthed new evidence.

To have carried the trial thus far has entailed severe sacrifices from humble men and women who have given out of their necessities in defence of men of their own class. New and heavy demands are inevitable, and it is hoped that others

than the workers will respond to the appeal. The fullest possible trial of this case is too important to be allowed to fail for lack of funds. It is not simply the lives of two possibly innocent men which are at stake, it is the good name of Massachusetts which demands that justice shall not fail for lack of funds to push the defence as adequately as the prosecution will be pushed by the Government to its final issue.

Those who desire to read for themselves the story of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, can receive it for ten cents by application to Box 37, Hanover Street Station, Boston, Massachusetts. I am, etc.,

Boston, Massachusetts.

ELIZABETH GLENDOWER EVANS.

## BOOKS.

#### THE SINISTER SIDE OF GENIUS.

WHAT is sinister in certain men of genius has always set my imagination wondering as to the reason why this quality is predominant in a dramatist such as Beddoes, in a musician such as Berlioz; why it is much less predominant in such writers as Tennyson and Pope, in whom this quality is practically non-existent.

What is sinister in Shelley has been discussed in a most interesting manner by many writers, who illustrate their statements with apt quotations from Shelley's verse and prose; a poet who, inevitably destined to fall back on the terrible and horrible, after having seen, with abnormal vividness, the beautiful, is fated "to feel and portray them also with appalling vividness in their minutest particulars." Shelley invented "a little hell of his own" which he peopled with demons of his own creation; with, one supposes, a touch of Satanical pride; he discovered, after studying Calderón, the by no means amazing certainty of the Devil's existence; besides this, that the Book of Job is perhaps the greatest attempt ever made at explaining away evil from a God-created world.

Shelley was never at any time a reasonable man, and there never was a time when he was not under one form or another of hallucination, to which he had abandoned himself like a medium to a spiritual influence. It is only in "The Cenci" that he touched naked passion and human action: he said: "I don't think much of it. My object was to see how far I could succeed in describing passions I had never felt." The word "love" meant to him sympathy: that is to say a love which is almost sexless, the love, it might have been, of his own hermaphrodite, "that sweet monster of the double sexes." He could imagine incest without repugnance; he could be innocently attracted by certain things which, to one more normally sexual, would have indicated perversity. Fascinated—as Baudelaire and Leopardi and Cyril Tourneur and Beddoes were—by every problem of evil, he is not perverse in the sense in which these are perverse: he contemplates evil with a child's inquiring wonder of horror. Christina Rossetti sees life's mystery with a vague, spiritual fear; such as we find in the nervous ecstasy of Hoffman before the spectres of his own creation; such as we find in the ploughboy's animal terror as he crosses the graveyard hurriedly by night: a sensation of perilous uncertainty comes in a bewildering fashion into both these extremes. Her genius is essentially sombre; it writes itself on a dark background of horror; the thought of death has the same fascination for her that it had for Baudelaire and Leopardi; it is not with Baudelaire's repulsion nor with Leopardi's attraction, that this fascination seizes her; it is, indeed, a kind of whimsical sympathy with the poor dead, like that expressed in two famous lines of "Les Fleurs du Mal."

"Great literature," wrote Yeats, "has always been written in a like spirit with that of Balzac in 'La Peau

de Chagrin'—when he makes us understand that the coquette hides her momentary self behind her actual self in a moment of heartlessness—and is, indeed, the forgiveness of sin, and when we find it becoming the accusation of sin, as in George Eliot, who plucks Tito in pieces with as much assurance as if he had been clockwork, literature has begun to change into something else." Balzac's novels are full of great passions and strange problems; a devouring passion of thought turned on all the situations by which humanity expresses itself, in its flight from the horror of immobility; he creates, as the poets create, a humanity more logical than average life—an inhuman, an abnormal, a sinister form of existence which has in its veins an energy almost more than human. Balzac takes a primary passion, puts it in a human body, and sets it to work itself out in visible action. Balzac is the equivalent of great cities.

The accusation of sin and the forgiveness of sin are in Balzac and in Hawthorne temperamentally different; Hawthorne's obsession was for one form or another of "handling sin"; puritanical, because that strain was in his blood; artistic, because he is the novelist of the soul, haunted by what in the soul is perilous and obscure, mysterious and menacing; he is also learned in criminal cases; all his stories are those of persons whom some crime has set by themselves; as in "the iron link of mutual crime, which neither he nor she could break. Like all other sins, it brought along with it its obligations." Delicately weighing the soul's burden of sin, he searches for the bloodstains on the conscience; his imagination is morbid, it spins fantastic webs; yet, while what in Poe of the fantastic, remains geometrical, Hawthorne's remains always, for good and evil, moral.

A certain critic says that Meredith "with the natural hatred of a great imaginative genius, appeals to a permanent spirit belonging to a race composed entirely of mortal and transitory men and women, a spirit which belongs to all men, without properly belonging to any one of them." It is with fine irony that Meredith refers to this question in one of his letters in regard to Stendhal. "*L'Amour* ought not to be dissected, and indeed can't be. For when we've killed it with this object, the spirit flies, and then where is *l'Amour*?" Meredith's genius was immense, his imagination fascinating: he was the greatest novelist we ever had, with the exception of Thomas Hardy at his finest; who is always dejected and a little sinister. Meredith can at any moment become sinister, sinister, I mean, in the tragic sense of the word: as in the fiery race of events, where dawn and darkness meet, in "*Rhoda Fleming*"; he is never dejected. Decadent, in the modern sense, a master of the art of tragic comedy, all his characters have the same inconsequent vividness; in them a capricious life burns always with a wavering flame. I have always read his novels, with the tacit approval of this very difficult literary conscience of mine: certainly it approves me in admiring them. When it comes to the question of his verse, one's conscience hesitates. "*Modern Love*" (1862) is an unsurpassable masterpiece: the lines burn into one like the touch of a corroding acid. Besides this, "*The Nuptials of Attila*," "*Cassandra*," and I know not how many separate poems, have in them some thing convulsive, passionate and fierce. "Man must indeed reject the more vile and bestial elements which he sees in Nature—one can not insist too strongly upon this aspect of Meredith's teaching." The fact is that there is in his verse an almost pagan sense of the intimacy of the benignant and awful powers of Nature; his

philosophy is not Browning's "wild joy of living"; it is earth seen through a brain, not through a temperament; his songs are sung, not with the irrepressible ecstasy of the Mænads, but with the wise, collected ecstasy of Melempas—the great snake-inspired physician who, "with love exceeding a simple love of the things" that glide in grasses, loved every animal. Only, while Meredith's poetry is always what Rossetti called "amusing," he hammers out his rhymes on the anvil on which he has forged his clangorous words, disdainfully and scornfully.

"No poet," I said of Shelley, "ever handled foulness and horror with such clean hands. The early novels are filled with tortures, the early poems profess to be the ravings of a hanged madwoman; '*Alastor*' dwells lingeringly on death; '*Queen Mab*' and '*The Revolt of Islam*' on blood and martyrdom; madness is the centre of '*Julian and Naddal*'; the first act of '*Prometheus Unbound*' celebrates an unearthly agony; '*The Cenci*' is a mart and a slaughterhouse of souls and bodies; while a comic satire is made up wholly out of the imagery of the swine-trough." The curious fact in regard to a man whose genius was on the whole pure and ecstatic, who lived continually in a state of hallucination, whose passions were abstract, the curious fact revealed in his confession that his passion for the beautiful Emilia Viviani was the Ixion of a cloud, who worshipped a shadow for a shadow, whose "*Epipsychedion*" is an elixir for all lovers, into which the passionate casuistry of Donne seems to have passed as into a crucible:

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all  
We can desire, O Love!—

is that so much of his verse is abnormal. In the superb poem which begins:

The Serpent is cast out of Paradise,  
is there not, in this inevitable transposition of feeling  
into form, some absent savour?

The critic referred to puts forth this curious theory. "It is the object of the present essay to show that there was that in his poetry which puts him in touch rather with Poe and Baudelaire than with his beloved Sophocles and Plato, and that this literary quality is inseparably connected with a certain strain in his character, as manifested in the everyday relations of his life." I fail to see any resemblance either in Shelley's life or in his verse with the lives and the verses of Baudelaire and Poe. The existences of both writers were tragic. Baudelaire, possessed with "too much love of living," undermined his strength by his excesses; for, as he wrote in 1864: "Nothing can console me in my detestable misery, in my humiliating situation, nor especially in my vices." Poe, in spite of his genius, drifted, let himself be drifted, with certainly no intention of ruining himself. He had no strength of will; he had not enough grip on his constitution to live wisely, to live well. Had he chosen the form of his death, he might have desired to die like the sick women in his pages—*mourant des maux bizarres*.

On the contrary, when I was writing on John Keats, I quoted this decadent line—

One faint eternal eventide of gems—  
which might have been written in jewelled French by Mallarmé; together with certain lines such as—

Sick to lose  
The amorous promise of her lone complain,  
Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain,  
which luxuriate, almost like Baudelaire, in the bodily  
translations of emotion.

There is something sinister in the bizarre genius of Monticelli; his delights are all violent, and, in their abstract intoxication of the eyes, can be indicated only in terms of cruelty and lust; beauty to him is a kind of torture; he weaves dissonance into fantastic progressions, in a kind of very conscious madness, a sadism of sound. He is neurotic, tragic and sombre. Gustave Moreau is haunted by the image of Salome, of Judith, Messalina, Helen on the walls of Troy; he sees Bathsheba tragically; his graven images are those of spectral women who haunt the brain of the student. His painting, like that of Simeon Solomon, is sexless; his art is sterile. So, in the same sense, are the greater part of Solomon's creations in paint; "a void and wonderfully vague desire" fills those faces, feverish and feminine; ghosts of themselves, who hang—for their sexual sins—in space, dry, rattling, the husks of desire.

Beardsley, to whom corruption revealed itself in a beautiful form, saw sin transfigured by beauty; it is because he loves beauty that beauty's degradation possesses him; always his designs have in them a diabolical beauty, in which move and whirl a world of ghosts, whose desires are quivering, passionate for flight; no overwhelming passion—as in Rodin's creations—hurries them beyond themselves; one line of his, which rounds the cloven-footed sin in "The Scarlet Pastoral," is in itself the condemnation of that vice which it exposes.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

#### A TWENTIETH-CENTURY CONSTITUTION.

WITH a gravity and a serenity worthy of Viscount Bryce or Professor Dicey, Mr. William MacDonald, in his "New Constitution for a New America,"<sup>1</sup> discusses a revolutionary revision of our Federal system of government. It is an interesting commentary on the intelligence of the voters of New York that the author of such a work, like Mr. Wilson, could not, under the beneficent terms of the Silver-Lusk law, hold a position in our public schools, and this notwithstanding his mature wisdom and ripe scholarship. The reason is that he advocates a change, peaceful, it is true, in our form of government!

Mr. MacDonald proposes to substitute for our present system the parliamentary system with Cabinet responsibility. He suggests a modification of our political arithmetic. He would have us combine with the representation of geographical areas and numerically reckoned heads, the representation of social and economic groups. He does not think that man is solely an economic animal, but he believes that the potentialities of our nature are not all developed under a regime of arithmetical politics. In making these proposals, Mr. MacDonald is not naive. He is fully aware of the criticism, sharp and well-founded, which has recently been brought against the Cabinet scheme of government; but on weighing the merits of the case, he approves it on the theory that perfection is nowhere to be found. He would add another element of popular control in the form of the recall of elected representatives. This he considers a make-weight against the concentration of forces that seems inherent in the Cabinet plan.

After the structure of the government, comes its powers. Here Mr. MacDonald is firm. Congress should charter and regulate all interstate corporations, regulate or own and operate railways and national utilities, and develop all natural resources. Education and divorce should be brought within Federal jurisdiction. A national budget system should be installed and Congress compelled to follow a procedure designed to secure responsibility and publicity.

Now, to the position of the States in the Federal system; here, too, Mr. MacDonald proposes some radical alterations. He would not attempt to deprive the States

of their equal representation in the Senate, because it is guaranteed by the existing law and public morals. He would, however, abolish the State militia and make the Federal Government responsible for suppressing all grave disorders. He would sweep away the present dual responsibility and authorize the President to use Federal troops without waiting for a call from the State affected. At the same time, the employment of armed guards and detectives by private corporations should be forbidden. Full responsibility would thus rest in effect upon the Federal administration. Federal laws and treaties could be enforced against recalcitrant States and lynching could be firmly put down.

Enough has been said to show that Mr. MacDonald has written an interesting and important book. It should be widely read. Teachers of government should use it in connexion with their systematic texts. It will stir fresh currents of opinion and dispel some of the comic superstition that now hangs around our constitutional law.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

#### A LITTLE GREAT COUNTRY.

WHEN a European country less than one-third the size of the State of New York and situated during the war in a position of great danger of pressure from both sides, has been able to emerge from those strenuous years with its chief institutions stronger than ever as bulwarks of the national well-being; and when moreover this same little country has been able to help in the provisioning of all Europe, it becomes something more than a matter of mere curiosity to try to discover the secret of this extraordinary stability.

Dr. Frederic C. Howe's recent volume "Denmark: A Co-operative Commonwealth,"<sup>1</sup> gives the explanation. Denmark's remarkable system of agricultural co-operation is already known. But what distinguishes Dr. Howe's book from others on the same subject is the fact that he never loses sight of fundamental principles. Co-operation in Denmark, he shows, has succeeded because it is based on democracy. To quote his own words:

Democracy in Denmark is far more than a form of government. It is an economic and industrial thing. It is a people organized to use the Government for the benefit of the people. It is economic rather than political democracy that distinguishes this little State from other countries of the world.

Denmark has proved that the co-operative system can achieve large-scale production and distribution without monopoly or profiteering, and can succeed by quality of product alone. Danish co-operation has accomplished by popular voluntary action what, we are told in America and elsewhere, is impossible without monopolistic control.

Dr. Howe gives us a hasty glimpse of Denmark's history, its former imperialistic glory, then its fall from this high estate to what seemed like ruin. The story of how Denmark shook off the unnecessary trappings of imperialism and militarism and learned to work out essential things, is a lesson that may well come with a message of hope to her once powerful neighbour to the southward, as well as to other European countries that are now suffering from the effects either of defeat or victory. Denmark saved herself by a sane nationalism. Not the nationalism that entrenches itself behind tariff-barriers, but the nationalism that concerns itself with needed reforms at home and improves the home market before seeking markets elsewhere. When this was done Danish co-operators developed their foreign trade in the one sane way, by developing a high and uniform standard of production and a system of co-operative distribution that abolishes exploiting intermediaries.

That this was done first of all in the agricultural field need not invalidate the lesson of Denmark for other countries. No matter what the industrial development of a country, agriculture remains the basic toil upon which civilization rests. "When the farmer is prosperous all the

<sup>1</sup> "A New Constitution for a New America." William MacDonald. New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc. \$2.00.

<sup>1</sup> "Denmark: A Co-operative Commonwealth." Frederic C. Howe. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.00.

country is prosperous" is a popular saying which is quoted everywhere but apparently never believed—except in Denmark. Denmark has put agriculture on a paying basis. The farmer has become an important factor in the economic and political life of the country. The Danish farmer can make a comfortable living on a very small acreage. In fact, he has all but realized the dream of a certain American writer in his book, "A Little Land and a Living."

There are 250,000 farm-holdings in Denmark, 180,000 of them less than forty acres in extent. 133,000 are less than thirteen acres in size and 68,000 less than one and a half acres. Intelligent co-operation and intelligent State-aid have enabled the owners of the 68,000 small farms to obtain the same prices for their products in the home and foreign market as do their larger competitors. And what is more important, the small farmer has won a sense of self-respect and a realization of the dignity of his profession.

Denmark is a country of farmers. It is also a country with a very high cultural and educational standard. Farm-tenancy is almost unknown, and so is illiteracy: the connexion is worth noting. The Government of Denmark devotes considerable time and money to agricultural and educational problems, and very little of either time or money to militaristic or imperialistic enterprises. The ultimate result is a higher general level of prosperity than in any other country in the world. There are few great fortunes in Denmark, but very little poverty.

This book will be met with the usual comment that what is possible in a small country like Denmark would not be possible in a large country like the United States, for instance. Dr. Howe has anticipated this objection. He has carefully pointed out that the value of Denmark's example does not lie in a slavish imitation of agricultural or co-operative methods, excellent though these may be. It lies in an understanding of the true function of the State as shown by modern Denmark. And also, possibly, in that little country's understanding of the things that count.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

### THE HERMIT OF SÉRIGNAN.

MR. BERNARD MIALL's translation and abridgment of Abbé Augustin Fabre's "Life of Jean-Henri Fabre"<sup>1</sup> is a good autobiographical scrapbook, culled from the "Souvenirs" of the great popularizer of entomology and held together by thin threads of biographical comment. Clearly the Abbé is one of that once numerous class of thinkers who did not hold it irreverent to accept the law of gravitation that unites the utmost parts of the universe but shuddered at the thought of a law of evolution that links man to the apes. Jean-Henri Fabre, I believe, would not have hesitated to accept evolution had he fully understood the theory, but apparently he did not. Keen observer of the habits of insects he certainly was, but this, to quote, in a different sense, the words of the Abbé's preface,

is not to say that everything in the life and work of our hero is equally perfect and worthy of admiration. Whether knowledge or virtue be in question, human activity must always fall short somewhere, must always in some degree be defective.

An example of Fabre's reasoning on evolution may be taken from the opening chapter of "More Hunting Wasps,"<sup>2</sup> the latest of the excellent translations by Mr. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos:

Two contrasting points impress me in the facts which I have just set forth: the shrewdness of *Pompilus* [wasps that stock their nests with spiders] and the folly of the spider. I will admit that the wasp may gradually have acquired, as being highly beneficial to her posterity, the instinct by which she first of all so judiciously drags the victim from its refuge, in order there to paralyse it without incurring danger, pro-

vided that you will explain why the *Segestria* [the spider], possessing an intellect no less gifted than that of *Pompilus*, does not yet know how to counteract the trick of which she has so long been the victim.

It would be idle at this late date to debate the fact of evolution, whatever its *modus operandi* may be, but it may be asked, in this connexion, what would have happened had the spider really learned "how to counteract the trick." The answer is simply that the wasp would not have caught the spider; Fabre would never have seen what he did see; and we should have missed the interesting account of his observations.

Possibly a more fruitful question concerns the reason for certain defects in Fabre's work. Perhaps no more satisfactory explanation may be found for his faults than for his virtues. In both cases, it may simply be that he was born that way; but I am inclined to think that, had Darwin lived as Fabre did, some one else—Wallace, for instance—would now be occupying Darwin's place in our minds. Darwin belonged to an educated family, grew up in a cultivated society, received a liberal training, travelled widely, was brought into contact with a wide range of affairs, and was never hard pressed by the wolf at the door.

What a contrast to the case of Fabre! The peasant boy was sent to live with his grandparents, "people whose quarrel with the alphabet was so great that they had never opened a book in their lives." At seven he went to a school kept by his godfather, Pierre Ricard, in a room that "was at once a school, a kitchen, a bedroom, a dining-room, and, at times, a chicken-house and a piggery." At ten he entered the *lycée* of Rodez where his "functions as a serving-boy in the chapel entitled" him "to free instruction as a day-boarder." We can not here follow him in detail from the time he left the *lycée* with ill luck "swooping down, relentlessly." He became a pupil-teacher at a normal college, where the class-rooms were "like so many cages for wild beasts, devoid of daylight or air." Then he was schoolmaster at Carpentras, where he "devoted a month's salary to the acquisition of a book." While he was professor of physics and chemistry in the *lycée* of Ajaccio, Moquin-Taudon said to him: "Leave your mathematics. No one will take the least interest in your formulæ. Get to the beast, the plant; and, if, as I believe, the fever burns in your veins, you will find men to listen to you." When he was transferred to the *lycée* of Avignon he followed this advice; but, writing of that time, he is forced to speak of

these heavy cares of a poor professor of physics who, after piling up diplomas and for a quarter of a century performing services of uncontested merit, was receiving for himself and his family a stipend of sixteen hundred francs, or less than the wages of a groom in a decent establishment. Such was the disgraceful parsimony of the day where education was concerned; such was the edict of our Government red-tape: I was an irregular, the offspring of my solitary studies.

We may regret that such was the case, and incidentally fear that times have not greatly changed, but his "solitary studies" were certainly a marked feature of Fabre's life, finally culminating in his becoming the "Hermit of Sérignan." Whether he was the offspring of his solitary studies (for even in his studies for his degrees he taught himself), or whether his solitariness was the offspring of his own personality is a question. At any rate, he was out of step with the world, so much so that there is justification for Professor Wheeler's explanation of the rather conspicuous absence of scientific men at the Jubilee when the literary world was doing him honour:

The reserved and unsympathetic attitude of entomologists towards Fabre was very largely due to the fact that he was a crotchety and opinionated recluse, who seems never to have made the slightest attempt to enter into friendly, personal or epistolary relations with other entomologists, who never mentioned and probably never read the work of his contemporaries, who lost no opportunity of holding up to ridicule some of the most important entomological studies, such as insect taxonomy, and who repeated investigations that had been made by others, without intimating and evidently without knowing that such investigations had long been known to the entomological world.

<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Jean-Henri Fabre, the Entomologist, 1823-1910." Abbé Augustin Fabre. Translated by Bernard Miall. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. \$2.50.

<sup>2</sup> "More Hunting Wasps." Jean-Henri Fabre. Translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. \$2.50.

Fabre was one of the first to write popular textbooks of nature study.<sup>1</sup> He was a tireless and careful observer of the habits of insects. He described these observations with scientific minuteness; and that he made them interesting to the general public is attested by the long list and large sales of his translations. But the Abbé draws a wrong conclusion when he says:

The danger of such scientific records when they are written by a man of letters and a poet like Fabre into the bargain, is that there is a danger of their being written with more art than exactitude. And it is apparently this that causes so many scientists to distrust science that also claims to be literature.

I think most entomologists rate Fabre's observational powers very highly and are keen enough to detect his facts, even though the facts are somewhat masked by literary verbiage. Nor are entomologists as averse to fine writing as is generally believed; they merely lack either the ability or the time for it themselves. On the other hand, they realize that the value of Fabre's records is greatly impaired by his impatient unwillingness to give correct names to the creatures under observation, so that fellow-workers in other parts of the world may know which of these creatures he is discussing; and they regret that Fabre's eyes were focused so closely on the insects of Sérignan that he was unable to see Biology striding past him in its rapid advance under the leadership of Darwin and the other masters of the day.

FRANK E. LUTZ.

#### SHORTER NOTICES.

THE school of the American humorous essayist—if the word school may be applied to anything possessing so slight a regard for discipline—is a sort of paradise in which the study-periods are continually being shortened to provide a longer recess. The yard is filled with lusty players, playing tag with phrases, caring little whether school keeps open or not as long as they are having such a rattling good time. They enjoy one another's company; they applaud one another's palpable hits; their goal is apt to be an ephemeral joke rather than a choice bit of durable wit. In his latest book, "Turns About Town,"<sup>2</sup> Mr. Holliday displays his fondness for the game—a game in which he scores with such facility. Perhaps the fact that much of the material has been retrieved from the newspapers may be pleaded in extenuation, but surely there are a sufficient number of "slangsters" in the field without Mr. Holliday joining in.

L. B.

IN fashioning the gypsy romances in the volume called "Ghitza,"<sup>3</sup> the author reveals a style which is in many respects a mirror of the life with which he deals. Not only in his materials, but in the gaunt, lean manner of their narration, does he emphasize the uncouth, primitive conditions of life, the untamed passions of men and beasts, and the unceasing struggle against the elements "in cold, clear nights, when even the wind was frozen still." Mr. Bercovici's style is somewhat harsh and angular, and the cumulative effect of his stories is attained by those arts of emphasis and repetition that associate themselves with an ancient civilization which has lost little of its roughness. The stories are skilfully constructed, swift in movement, and vivid in climax. Although there are uneven stretches, the preponderant result is an impression of sincerity and strength.

L. B.

THE anonymous English author of "The Mirrors of Downing Street" now offers "some social reflections" entitled "The Glass of Fashion,"<sup>4</sup> in which he holds up Mrs. Asquith and Colonel Repington as undesirable types of English society. In contrast to Mrs. Asquith, the author exalts for our admiration the appalling graciousness of certain highly placed English ladies who put in considerable time pouring tea for colonial officers during the war. For such phenomena as Colonel Repington, Mrs. Asquith, Bolshevism and Prussianism, the author holds what he calls "Darwinism" responsible, and we gather from

<sup>1</sup> "Animal Life in Field and Garden." Jean-Henri Fabre. Translated by Florence Constable Bicknell. New York: The Century Company. \$2.50.

<sup>2</sup> "Turns About Town." Robert Cortes Holliday. New York: George H. Doran Co. \$2.00.

<sup>3</sup> "Ghitza and Other Romances of Gypsy Blood." Konrad Bercovici. New York: Boni & Liveright. \$2.00.

<sup>4</sup> "The Glass of Fashion." A Gentleman with a Duster. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.50.

his pages that Charles Darwin must have been a peculiarly vicious German propagandist. Prussianism the author defines as "a system of government which refuses any relation with ethics." The meaning of England, however, he assures us is "Moral Character." To a certain extent this is true, and whether a British Government is forcing opium upon the Chinese, or spoiling the Egyptians, or conniving at the establishment of slavery in captured German colonies, or licensing arson as an agency of government in Ireland, we are always assured of a high moral purpose. Through chapter after chapter of moralities, the writer makes it clear that no other nation is exactly fit to dwell on the same planet with his own. He is logical enough, save for a flaw on page 33, where he asserts that "no great nation would repudiate its debt unless actual ruin brought the whole financial structure of its civilization to the dust." Since we now know that no sooner was the armistice signed than the British Premier began to implore the United States Government for permission to repudiate the British debt to America, this seems a considerable crack in the glass; and the reflections of a cracked mirror are scarcely to be taken seriously.

H. K.

WHAT song the sirens sang, and what name Achilles assumed when he hid among women, are, as speculations, considerably less thorny than that as to what or whom Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote his sonnets. Who was the "dark lady" who casts her shadow over the middle group of them? Who was Mr. W. H., the "onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets"—merely the man who procured or "begot" them for the piratical publisher Thorpe, as George Chalmers believed and as Sir Sidney Lee maintains? Or, if by "begetter" we are to understand, not obtainer, but inspirer, was he William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, or Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton? Samuel Butler, in his edition of the sonnets (1899), rejected with great vehemence all three of these theories, and suggested, though reservedly, the name Willie Hughes—derived from the punning sonnets and the line, "A man in hew, all *Hews* in his controwling." This theory had been anticipated a few years by Oscar Wilde in an essay on the sonnets, a fragment of which was published in an English review, but which in its entirety had been lost to the world until it was recently discovered by Mr. Mitchell Kennerley and published as "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." Samuel Butler's contribution, vigorous and persuasive as it is, remains in the realm of critical scholarship; Wilde's essay is a half-serious, half-playful fantasy, making some show, it is true, of learned argument, but relying for its real force on its genuine, if rather fragile, literary quality. There was always something flashy about Oscar Wilde, even in his sincerest moments—perhaps he was flashiest when *most* sincere—and nothing that he wrote has the final honesty of utterance that we look for in the highest literature. In prose, as in the present essay, he repeatedly tried his hand at being, like Pater, infinitely deft and carefully chromatic, but he succeeded in being scarcely more than pleasingly rococo. Yet it is still possible to read such prose as we have in "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." without condescension and with some unaffected enjoyment. The trick, though it never passes beyond that, is well done and no doubt worth doing. At times it suggests a more sophisticated Elbert Hubbard: "Influence is simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to oneself, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss. Every disciple takes away something from his master." This is Wilde at his best, and it is excellent. One need not be gnomic in order to write prose of distinction, but for Wilde it was almost the only way. As to whether or not he has made out a case for Willie Hughes, the actor, as the object of Shakespeare's passion—he has invested the story with a quiet and pretty pathos and has interpreted the sonnets with the intuition of an artist rather than the erudition of a scholar, and what more need he have done?

N. A.

#### A REVIEWER'S NOTEBOOK.

SOMETIMES, in trying to explain the unsatisfactoriness of our modern literature, we forget how close the greater part of the American population still is to the agitations and the turmoil of the old border life. It required many a long age for Russia to evolve a high literary conscience out of the seed of the Cossacks; all true literature, in fact, represents a sort of generalized emotion recollected in tranquillity; it is a plant that blossoms only in a soil

<sup>1</sup> "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." Oscar Wilde. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. \$15.00.

that has known its fallow seasons, and its calm seasons, and its seasons of anxious and loving cultivation, an old soil, tried, stable and rich. Just so, there is a deep gulf fixed between the wildness of the artist and the wildness of the barbarian, as deep as that which separates the freedom of the philosopher from the freedom of the outlaw: the one is external, the other is internal. The barbarian, the Cossack, the plainsman is obliged, in order to become what Whitman called a "civilisee," to traverse a veritable *via dolorosa*, like the awkward age between infancy and manhood; he loses his most admirable characteristics, he becomes a neurotic type, he can not adapt himself, he is restless, anxious, consumed with ennui and a desire to escape, and it is only in the third and fourth generation of his descendants that the so-called higher attributes of civilization manifest themselves in their full strength. And our recent, our typically American literature is, after all, a product of the plains.

I AM not thinking so much of the uneasy, febrile, gnawing egotism that possesses our whole generation of writers, the general sense of maladjustment, the self-distrust, the hatred not only of our own but of all civilization. These are apparently universal symptoms of the age, though it may well be that they represent a parallel transition, the first emergence into the literary sphere of classes that have hitherto remained inarticulate. Thought and the necessity of maintaining a conscious existence are frightful burdens for those who have not been prepared for them. I have in mind especially the more orthodox American writers of the generation that is passing and their strange habits and beliefs. The public does not know how many of these men, like Indians in captivity, have drunk themselves to death: these popular favourites of the last thirty years have been extraordinarily ill-fated men. More singular still has been their contempt for other writers, for the literary life itself, their nostalgia for the life of "action," their timidity, their morbid love of respectability combined with a sort of hole-and-corner bohemianism, their incapacity for sustained, personal, creative work. Their real characters are concealed behind the smoke-screen of the publicity-agents, and when they die their lives are recounted by mendacious biographers—a type in which America excels. But in a few years, when the mist has cleared away, and the oxygen of advertising has ceased to keep their reputations artificially alive, these triumphant geniuses of our time will seem to us the most pathetic victims of an inchoate epoch.

ONE finds some interesting glimpses of a writer of this school in Al Jennings's "Through the Shadows with O. Henry."<sup>1</sup> The author of this book was a famous train-robber, one of those men who are apt to convince us that in a primitive society piety and virtue are on opposite sides of the fence. Roosevelt saw that, in spite of all his crimes, he was a man of his word and pardoned him; but before this he and Sidney Porter had met, first as fellow-refugees in Honduras, and later as fellow-inmates of the Ohio Penitentiary, and become fast friends. His book is the history of this friendship. To Jennings O. Henry was a hero, and the record of their intercourse has all the charm of an exceptional personal gentleness and goodness; it reveals, at the same time, certain curious facts that would prevent us, even without the evidence of O. Henry's work, from accepting the writer's estimate of his hero's genius. To be sure, Jennings himself speaks of having remonstrated with Porter for a certain want of "courage," the peculiar sort of courage, involuntary as it were, which, as a matter of fact, constitutes genius: otherwise, to him, Porter was the type of the aristocrat, the "civilisee" *in excelsis*, with "all the proud sensitiveness of the typical Southern gentleman." If we are to deal not in social but in psychological distinctions, however, we are obliged to draw from the evidence of this book quite a different conclu-

sion. Why did Porter run away when he was accused (unjustly, we are led to suppose) of embezzlement? Why did he get into the particular scrape that obliged him to leave Mexico? Why did he later live in such terror lest it should be discovered that he had passed four years in prison? These are not the traits of the free man, the man that makes the free writer. They are the traits rather of the barbarian in the stage of transition, the sick barbarian, half an outlaw and half a frightened child.

IT is a strange sign of our immaturity that to the American public, even the university public, O. Henry was a genuine creator, a man, that is, who wrote at the dictation of his own free, conscious will. It is this alone that constitutes the writer, the man who speaks with authority and not as the scribes. But to pass behind the evidence of O. Henry's work, so plainly a product, however "original," of the "freedom within necessity" that characterizes the ordinary fictioneer, what is the evidence of his life? "The man who tries to hurl himself against the tide of humanity is sure to be sucked down in the undertow," he said to Jennings. "I am going to swim with the current." Again: "No one shall hold the club of ex-convict over me. You can't beat the game if anyone ever finds out you once were a number. The only way to win is to conceal." Again: "I shall never mention the name of prison. I shall never speak of crime and punishments. I will forget that I ever breathed behind these walls." Again: "Here I am ready to leave this pen and I am beset with anxieties lest the world may guess my past." For years, we are told, he hesitated to write the story of Jimmy Valentine because, as he explained, "Convicts are not accepted in the best society even in fiction." Jennings, as I have said, remonstrated with him, feeling, as he remarks, that "Porter's attitude lacked courage." The fact is, of course, that O. Henry's fear of public opinion was so great that he was unable to make use in his work of these most poignant experiences of his life. "Bill Porter," his friend ingenuously observes, apropos of the episode of Jimmy Valentine, "was not the grim artist to paint that harsh picture for the world. He loved a happy ending. He could not even give the exact details of the safe-opening. It was too cruel for his light and winsome fancy. . . . In the story he gives the hero a costly set of tools wherewith to open the vault." Realism is not the only word in literature; on the other hand, the "true romance" is not the romance that springs from fear. One does not have to recall Dostoevsky and "The House of the Dead" in order to appreciate the difference between this attitude and the attitude of a free spirit.

"I HAVE been called the American Maupassant," O. Henry once remarked. "Well, I never wrote a filthy word in my life, and I don't like to be compared to a filthy writer." There we have the plainsman cowed by society: that morbid respect for the *conveniences* is characteristic of the man who can "shoot up a town in true Texas style" but who is lost when it comes to the values of civilization. O. Henry was the most painstaking of literary artisans, but he followed the patterns that were set before him with all the passionate anxiety of the man who desires to conform, who can not trust himself to go his own way. In his life, in his work, in his death he was the type of the American borderer who comes into contact with society only to go down before it.

THE Reviewer recommends the following recent books to the notice of readers of the *Freeman*:

"Men, Women and Boats," by Stephen Crane. The Modern Library. New York: Boni and Liveright. 90 cents.

"Sea and Sardinia," by D. H. Lawrence. New York: Thomas Seltzer. \$5.00.

"Modern Russian Poetry: an Anthology," Chosen and translated by Babette Deutsch and Avraham Yarmolinsky. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$1.75.

<sup>1</sup> "Through the Shadows with O. Henry." Al Jennings. New York: The H. K. Fy Company. \$2.50.

*A little tale about a library*

ONCE upon a time there were—as a matter of fact, the time is the present—three wise men: they read the FREEMAN. They were anxious that others might derive the benefit of the wisdom and wit that flow from its pages, so one of the men hied him to the custodian of the tomes and papyri which are collected for the common benefit of certain citizens of a large city on the Eastern coast of North America.

To this custodian he narrated the merits of the FREEMAN; he told him, eloquently, how the tonic qualities of that fountain of mental health would brighten the eyes and gladden the hearts of the multitude. Being a kind man as well as a wise man he offered to give said FREEMAN-tonic free for a twelvemonth, so that the people might learn to love the taste thereof.

The custodian was not a hasty man: important decisions demanded due deliberation. So he cogitated for weeks. Perhaps he would still be cogitating if, one sunny morn, the three wise men had not moved upon the keeper of the tomes in a body to make inquiry as to the outcome of his deep and viscous thought. Sadly, the man replied, If our people become addicted to this draught through the habit of a year, what may happen if we have not the means to continue it? Better never to cultivate a taste for it: thus saith our Committee. And he wiped away a tear from his filmy eye.

Then spake the three wise men: Lo, we will pay for the FREEMAN for five years! It shall cost your people nothing!

Again the Committee pondered, and then their scribe took goose-quill in hand and scratched in this wise:

“Your offer to send to this Library as a gift the FREEMAN has been considered by our Committee but they feel they will have to decline the offer you so kindly make.”

Gentle reader, this is a true story. It will give you a notion of what this paper, and others that seek to express ideas freely, have to contend with in this day and generation.

Is the FREEMAN in *your* library? If not, *will you* put it there?

R

*Special prescription for libraries*

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PLEASE send the FREEMAN for one year, for which I enclose \$6.00, to

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